



Enact the Nurse Licensure Compact (HB 2376 / SB 6209)

Background

Washington State is facing a nursing shortage. However, when qualified nurses move to Washington with a license to practice in another state, it takes months to get licensed to practice here – even if the standards for their original licensure are comparable to our state’s standards. Other states have solved this problem by enacting the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), which allows nurses that meet uniform licensure requirements to practice in other compact states without obtaining an additional license.

Currently, 34 states have enacted and implemented the NLC. Six other states either have pending NLC legislation or have enacted the NLC and are awaiting implementation. The NLC is especially helpful for military families and for communities that border adjacent states. Idaho and several other states with military bases have already enacted the NLC.

WSHA Position

WSHA strongly supports the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). The NLC increases access to care while maintaining the state’s enforcement authority to protect public safety.

According to a 2018 WSHA survey, almost a third of responding hospitals said it was taking longer than three months to hire for a vacant nurse position. The average number of open positions across all responding hospitals was 27, with several hospitals reporting more than 50 vacant positions. The NLC would help alleviate this nursing shortage and help improve access to telemedicine services provided by nurses.

Key Messages

- Enacting the NLC would be beneficial for military families and border communities, allowing nurses from other NLC states to work in Washington.
- Washington State is behind the curve in addressing this issue. Enacting the NLC would help address the current nursing shortage and further enable the use of telemedicine.
- Washington State would still retain enforcement authority for a nurse with a multistate NLC license.
- Nurses could still apply for a single-state, Washington-only license if they chose. Enacting the NLC means they would also have the option to apply for a multistate license.

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