

To: Members, House Health Policy Committee
From: Adam Carlson, Senior Vice President, Advocacy
Date: Dec. 9, 2021
Re: Senate Bill 759
Position: Support

The current situation facing our hospitals and health system is dire. As of December 8, 2021, 4,630 COVID-19 patients are hospitalized, with 996 in our ICUs, and have now surpassed Michigan's previous record for hospitalizations. There is no clear reason why cases have increased so dramatically in recent weeks, which means we have no clear end in sight to the current surge.

To add to the complexity of patient care, there are more than 20,692 open healthcare positions and an average vacancy rate of 14.3 percent. The problem is growing. Staff have reached the point of exhaustion and burn out is causing early retirements and enticing individuals to leave their stressful jobs in healthcare for other professions. Each month, more healthcare workers exit the workforce than what hospitals are able to replace.

There has been one flexibility that has been imperative to fighting the workforce shortage granted by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), Bureau of Professional Licensing. In March of 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, LARA activated its statutory authority pursuant to the Public Health Code which allows the department to grant licensure exemptions "in a time of disaster" such as a pandemic. Providers who are in good standing and trained, educated, and experienced from out of the state are allowed reciprocity to render medical care in Michigan without a Michigan license.

This provision gave hospitals needed flexibility to appropriately respond to the pandemic but the period for allowing licensure exemptions is set to expire Jan. 11, 2022. We have worked collaboratively with the administration to codify this flexibility into law through SB 759. Senate Bill 759 will allow hospitals and health systems the ability to quickly and efficiently recruit out-of-state workers.

Michigan hospitals need any and all staffing assistance and flexibility possible, which is why we are urging your support for Senate Bill 759. Thank you.

Brian Peters, Chief Executive Officer