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State Medical Board Effort to Streamline Medical Licensing Gains Support in U.S. Senate

*Bipartisan group says new licensing concept is
'in best interests of physicians and patients'*

(Euless, Texas, January 14, 2014) – A bipartisan group of 16 U.S. Senators has publicly commended state medical boards and the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) for their recent efforts to streamline the licensing process for physicians who wish to practice in multiple states – thus helping facilitate the use of telemedicine and increasing access to care throughout the United States.

In a [letter sent January 9th to the FSMB](#), the Senators applauded the progress being made by the state medical boards in the development of an Interstate Medical Licensure Compact – a newly proposed licensing option under which qualified physicians seeking to practice in multiple states would be eligible for expedited licensure in all states participating in the Compact. The Interstate Medical Licensure Compact would ensure that physicians are under the jurisdiction of the state medical board where the patient is located at the time of a medical interaction.

Under the new system, participating state medical boards would retain their licensing and disciplinary authority, but would agree to share information and processes essential to the licensing and regulation of physicians who practice across state borders. Participation in the Compact would be voluntary, for both states and physicians.

Those signing the letter included: John Thune (R-S.D.), Michael Enzi (R-Wyo.), Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), John Barrasso, MD (R-Wyo.), Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), John Boozman (R-Ark.), Tom Carper (D-Del.), Tom Coburn, MD (R-Okla.), Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), Al Franken (D-Minn.), James Inhofe (R-Okla.), Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), Tim Johnson (D-S.D.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), John D. Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.), and Mark Warner (D-Va.).

In the letter, the Senators noted that the proposed Compact system retains important patient-protection advantages of the current state-based medical licensing process. “We agree that allowing states to share information while allowing each state to retain jurisdiction over physicians who choose to practice in the state is in the best interest of both physicians and patients,” the letter said. The Senators noted that the new expedited licensure system would help ensure telemedicine is practiced in a “safe and accountable manner.”

Support is growing among legislators and health policymakers for the new system, which is expected to significantly reduce barriers to the process of gaining licensure in multiple states at a time when telemedicine is growing and millions of new patients are likely to enter into the U.S. health care system. The Interstate Medical Licensure Compact is expected to be of particular help in widening access to health care for patients in rural and underserved areas of the nation.

The Interstate Compact Taskforce (ICT), organized by the FSMB, is shaping the Compact’s basic terms of understanding. The initial draft of the Compact was recently distributed to state medical boards and other stakeholders for comment. Revised drafts are expected to be available for review and consideration throughout the spring and summer of 2014. The ICT has received support in its efforts from experts from the Council of State Governments, an organization of state legislators and other government officials that previously passed resolutions calling for the exploration of telehealth and medical licensing compacts that would ultimately improve access to care and protect patient safety.

“We are delighted by this new expression of support for this effort, which is being carefully developed in a way that meets the needs of patients, physicians and state medical boards – while ensuring, above all, the safe practice of medicine,” said Jon V. Thomas, MD, MBA, a member of the Interstate Compact Taskforce and Chair of the FSMB.

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About the FSMB

The FSMB is a national non-profit organization representing all medical boards within the United States and its territories that license and discipline allopathic and osteopathic physicians and, in some jurisdictions, other health care professionals. It assists these state and territorial medical boards as they go about their mandate of protecting the public’s health, safety and welfare. The FSMB leads by promoting excellence in medical practice, licensure, and regulation. For more information, please visit www.fsmb.org.