

Message from the Chair



WASHINGTON
**Medical
Commission**
Licensing. Accountability. Leadership.

WMC Advances Pathways for International Medical Graduates

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In June, I attended the Federation of State Medical Board meeting in Washington DC devoted to alternative licensing models for International Medical Graduates (IMGs). Many states are considering licensure pathways to address physician shortages, which occur in a variety of specialties and in underserved, rural, and economically disadvantaged regions. I left the national meeting delighted that Washington State is a leader in the U.S. in creating these important pathways. For over 20 years, I've experienced the tremendous importance of the Washington Medical Commission's (WMC) adoption of the Teaching-Research Pathway to medical licensure. This pathway has attracted outstanding IMGs to provide exceptional medical care, education, and research at Harborview Medical Center and the University of Washington Medical Center. The WMC is now making strides in creating a new opportunity for IMGs to work outside of academic institutions. This new program allows IMGs to gain clinical experience and progress towards Washington full MD licensure.

Who is an IMG?

The [Accredited Council for Graduate Medical Education \(ACGME\)](#) defines an IMGs as individuals who received their basic MD from a medical school outside of the U.S. and Canada. Note that the country of the medical school is important, not citizenship. U.S. citizens who graduate from medical schools outside of the U.S. or Canada are considered IMGs. In July 2025, students graduating from Canadian medical schools will be considered IMGs for GME programs in the US due to changes in Canadian certifications.

Clinical Experience Licenses

In a significant step forward, the WMC began issuing Clinical Experience (CE) Licenses in 2021. This limited license allows qualified IMGs to practice medicine under supervision for up to four years without completing a residency program. This pathway provides invaluable clinical experience, enhancing competitiveness for residency and other postgraduate programs. In fiscal year 2023, the WMC approved 11 of 22 CE License applications, with 24 licenses currently in practice.



Supporting IMGs: The IMG Implementation Workgroup

To further assist IMGs, Washington has established the IMG Implementation Workgroup. This group is dedicated to developing grant programs for organizations providing career guidance and clinical training to IMGs. Additionally, the workgroup is exploring processes for hardship waivers.

National Trends

Washington is not alone in its efforts to support IMGs. Several states, including Idaho, Colorado, Arizona, Iowa, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, Vermont, and Wisconsin, have implemented or are considering legislation to address IMG licensure challenges. These initiatives reflect a growing recognition of the value IMGs bring to the healthcare workforce.

Looking Ahead

The WMC's commitment to creating opportunities for IMGs is commendable. As the healthcare landscape evolves, it is essential to continue exploring innovative pathways to integrate IMGs into the medical profession.