

Office Email
sen.kaysejama@oregonlegislature.gov

Legislative Website
www.oregonlegislature.gov/Jama



Capitol Phone
503-986-1724

Capitol Address
900 Court St. NE, S-409,
Salem, Oregon 97301

Office Of State Senator Kayse Jama

Senate District 24 (D-East Portland, Damascus, Boring)

SB 849 - Licensing Pathway For Out-of-State And Internationally Educated Professionals

- 1. Bill Sponsors (Page 1)**
- 2. Community Partners and Supporters (Page 1)**
- 3. The Economic Contributions of Immigrants and Refugees in Oregon (Page 2-3)**
- 4. Legislative Backgrounds (Page 3-4)**
- 5. SB 849 Policy Summary (Page 4-5)**
- 6. Internationally Educated Workforce Reentry Grant Program (Page 5-6)**

Bill Sponsors

Senators Kayse Jama, Michael Dembrow, James Manning, Lew Frederick, Aaron Woods, and Wlnsvey Campos. **Representatives** Hoa Nguyen, Farrah Chaichi, and Andrea Valderrama.

Community Partners and Supporters

Community partners who are part of the bill development process: Immigrant and Refugee Community Organizations, Partners in Diversity, Worksystem, Oregon Center for Nursing, Portland Refugee Support Group, American Immigration Council, and World Education Services.

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission and the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement are also part of the bill development process. As state agencies, they will have no position.

Organizations who have endorsed SB 849: Oregon Workforce Partnership, Portland Business Alliance, Salem for Refugees, Oregon Nurses Association, Oregon AFSCME 75, and SEIU.

The Economic Contributions of Immigrants and Refugees in Oregon

Like much of the nation, Oregon is grappling with workforce shortages and demographic changes. Data analyzed by the American Immigration Council (the Council) demonstrates that immigrants and refugees are already helping to fill many of these gaps, but many internationally educated professionals still face barriers that lead to the underutilization of their skills and prevent their full participation in the Oregon labor force.

According to Council analysis of 2019 American Community Survey and Lightcast Labor Insights data:

- **Oregon is going to need more workers to complement the U.S.-born workforce**, which is facing increasingly critical shortages as the state's population ages. With 1.3 million Oregonians approaching retirement age in the next decade, fewer Americans are left in the workforce as a result.
- **In 2019, Oregon was home to more than 415,000 immigrants**, making up 12.4% of the state's workforce despite comprising just 9.9% of its population. These new Americans are critical to addressing the state's workforce shortages across the skills and education spectrum, with 80% of immigrant Oregonians being of working age (ages 16-64) compared to 62% of their U.S.-born counterparts, and one in five immigrants holding a bachelor's degree or higher.
- **Oregon has a growing demand for healthcare workers, educators, and social workers**, all key fields with occupations that can require certificates or occupational or professional licenses.
 - From 2018 to 2022, Oregon saw a large increase in demand for healthcare positions. The demand for licensed practical nurses increased by 97.7%, dentists increased by 40%, and registered nurses increased by 9.9%.
 - During the same period, job postings for elementary, middle, and secondary school teachers also increased. The demand for middle school teachers increased by 67% and teaching assistants increased by 53.7%.
 - The need for social workers has also become apparent. Job postings for social workers and mental health social workers increased by 112.4% and 442.9%, respectively, between 2018 and 2022.

- **As the state has seen an increase in demand for multilingual and culturally competent employees, internationally educated professionals are uniquely positioned to provide support across all industries.**
 - From 2018 to 2022, the number of online job postings that requested bilingual skills increased by 62.7% for healthcare practitioners, 116.3% for social work and counseling occupations, and 101.7% for K-12 teachers and educational support workers (such as teaching assistants and tutors).
- **Despite barriers to entry, immigrants and refugees are already helping fill critical workforce shortages.** The Council’s research found that from 2015 to 2019, on average, 5.9% of those employed as registered nurses, 6.8% of workers in educational professions (elementary, middle, and secondary school), and more than one in ten of Oregon’s social workers were born outside of the United States.
- **Immigrants and refugees are uniquely positioned to fill gaps across the skills spectrum.** Nearly 15% of immigrants and refugees hold a graduate degree, compared to 13% of U.S.-born Oregonians, and 28% of immigrants and refugees have less than a high school education compared to just 6% of the U.S.-born population. Despite making up 10% of the state’s population, 44% of workers in crop production and 26% of software developers were immigrants.
- **Oregon has an opportunity to tackle the skills mismatch, known as brain waste.** The Council’s analysis shows that more than 32% of the state’s immigrants and refugees are college-educated workers employed in occupations that don’t require a bachelor’s degree.

In order for Oregon to remain competitive and address critical workforce shortages in high-demand fields, it must implement policies that attract and retain immigrant and refugee talent that is complementary to the U.S.-born workforce and build career pathways for immigrants and refugees who are already here.

Legislative Backgrounds

Many studies have explored the barriers facing internationally educated professionals in obtaining licensure and restarting their careers in the U.S. Among the most common challenges – those that are particular to the situation of internationally educated professionals themselves – are limited English proficiency, a lack of familiarity with the U.S. workforce system and professional licensing requirements, the paralysis that often comes with the immigrant’s loss of professional identity, a lack of U.S.-based professional networks, and the time and financial constraints of having to work “survival” jobs and meet family obligations.

Other more structural obstacles facing internationally educated professionals are the complexity and state-by-state variation of licensing requirements; arbitrary and sometimes discriminatory regulations, including time limits to complete testing, and rigid English proficiency standards; unclear and inconsistent messages from licensing boards, workforce bodies, and higher education institutions on the relicensing process; lack of financial assistance to cover licensing, testing, and other fees; and a lack of dedicated support to help internationally educated professionals navigate these and other barriers. For each profession and in each state there are a unique set of regulatory, institutional, and logistical hurdles that internationally educated professionals must overcome to be relicensed in the U.S.

SB 849 aims to address these barriers listed above by tackling unique barriers to occupational licensing, funding programs with proven success records of creating tailored career pathways in high demanding jobs, and ensuring impacted communities are aware of and have access to programs.

SB 849 Policy Summary

- 1. Licensing Board Staff Training:** Require all professional licensing board staff who interact with internationally educated professionals through the licensure process to receive culturally responsive training approved by the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement.
- 2. Licensing Guides:** Require all professional licensing boards to develop easy-to-follow licensing guides to better inform internationally educated professionals of state licensing requirements, processes, options, costs, and timelines. The licensing guides should be published by July 1, 2024.
- 3. English Proficiency Testing:** Allow applicants, who have already passed an English proficiency test for licensure in another state, to apply for licensure in Oregon without retesting English proficiency.
- 4. Remove the seven-year time limit for completing all three steps of the USMLE.** Currently, 12 states including California, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania have no time limit, and 10 states including Indiana, Kansas, Ohio, Virginia, and Wisconsin have a 10-year time limit.
- 5. Allow the medical board to issue a limited license to practice medicine** to an applicant who:
 - Has passed steps 1 and step 2 of the United States Medical Licensing Examination;
 - Is certified by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates, its successor organization, or another credential evaluation service approved by the board rule; and
 - Submits to the board the applicant's fingerprints for purposes of a criminal records check.

An individual licensed under this subsection may practice medicine under the supervision of a physician who holds an unlimited license to practice medicine in Oregon and who practices in the same or substantially similar clinical specialty. The individual and the supervising physician shall submit to the board a practice agreement that meets the requirements established by the board.

The medical board may also establish a limit on the number of individuals licensed under this subsection that a physician of this subsection may supervise.

*Note: The USMLE is a **three-step** examination for medical licensure in the U.S. **Step 1**, which focuses on the basic science of medical practice, and **Step 2**, which tests clinical knowledge and skills, are typically completed by U.S. medical graduates during medical school. **Step 3**, which emphasizes patient management in ambulatory settings, is typically completed at the end of the intern year of residency and allows a physician a license to practice medicine without supervision.*

Internationally Educated Workforce Reentry Grant Program

1. Grant Overview and Timeline

SB 849 directs the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to establish an Internationally Educated Workforce Reentry Grant Program to award grants to Local Workforce Development Boards that will contract with non-profit organizations, post-secondary educational institutions, and employers who have programs that provide eligible career guidance and support services to internationally educated residents of Oregon who are seeking to enter the Oregon workforce.

2. Eligible Professions

- Certified nursing assistant, licensed practical nurse, and registered nurse;
- Physician;
- Pharmacist;
- Dentist and dental hygienist;
- Behavioral health and mental health worker; and
- Nurse, school counselor or teacher at a school.

In determining grant award amounts, the HECC in consultation with the local workforce development boards shall develop a formula that uses factors including, but not limited to the geographic distribution of internationally educated individuals and the regional availability of resources and services for internationally educated individuals.

The agency must award grants no later than June 30, 2024.

3. Eligible Grant Activities

- Educational and career navigation services;
- Guidance on determining best career pathways;
- Support in becoming proficient in eligible industry-specific English;
- Support in becoming proficient in the use of information technology;
- Support for increasing knowledge of health care and educational systems;
- Support for trauma-informed care;
- Support for clinical preparation;
- Culturally responsive training;
- Support for job placement; and
- Financial support such as tuition and fees incurred in relation to training or licensing, living wages during the training or licensing process, and costs associated with exam preparation.

4. Data Collection

In administering the program, the commission shall:

- Collaborate with the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement to establish requirements for Local Workforce Development Boards' contracting and reporting;
- Use the program to assist in coordinating the planning, development, and implementation of a comprehensive system for integrating individuals who are internationally educated in eligible professions into the WorkSource Oregon system;
- Partner with CBOs that work with internationally educated populations to develop and maintain a voluntary roster of internationally educated populations entering the Oregon workforce;
- Make publicly available summary reports that show the aggregate number and distribution, by geography and specialty, of the internationally educated population in Oregon.

No later than September 1, 2026, the HECC shall prepare and submit a report on the implementation and success of the Internationally Educated Workforce Reentry Grant Program, which may include recommendations for legislation. The report must include information regarding:

- The total number of internationally educated professionals who were served by the program;
- The specific types of direct services provided to program participants;
- The total amount of financial assistance provided to program participants;
- The types of financial assistance that were provided to program participants; and
- Barriers for internationally educated professionals to participate in the Oregon workforce.