

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

This bill does not appear to implicate any of the House Principles.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics

Part III, chapter 401, Florida Statutes, provides for the regulation of emergency medical technicians and paramedics by the Department of Health ("department"). Any person who wishes to be certified as an emergency medical technician or paramedic must apply to the department, under oath, on forms provided by the department. An applicant for certification must do the following:

- complete the most recent emergency medical technician or paramedic training course as provided for by the United States Department of Transportation and as approved by the department;
- with respect to paramedics, within 1 year after course completion, pass a state-developed certification examination;
- with respect to emergency medical technicians, within 1 year after course completion, pass the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians-developed certification examination;
- certify under oath that he or she is not addicted to alcohol or any controlled substance;
- certify under oath that he or she is free from any physical or mental defect or disease that might impair the applicant's ability to perform his or her duties;
- with respect to paramedic certification, hold a certificate of successful course completion of advanced cardiac life support from the American Heart Association or the Continuing Education Coordinating Board for Emergency Medical Services (CECBEMS);
- with respect to emergency medical technician certification, hold either a current American Heart Association, American Red Cross or the (CECBEMS) cardiopulmonary resuscitation course card.

Emergency medical technicians and paramedics must renew their certification on a biennial basis. Renewal candidates are subject to continuing education requirements and demonstration of current certifications. Renewal candidates must take 30 hours of refresher training in their respective area and an additional 2 hours of HIV AIDS training as well.¹

There are approximately 18,456 paramedics and 30,010 emergency medical technicians (EMTs) in Florida.² Each paramedic and emergency medical technician employed within an emergency medical services system must operate under the direct supervision of a physician medical director, or indirectly by standing orders or protocols. Each emergency medical system agency employs or contracts with a physician medical director to provide this medical oversight and quality assurance. The larger emergency medical system providers in Florida have over 1,000 emergency medical technicians and paramedics on staff, all of them working under one medical director.

¹ Certification renewal requirements for paramedics and emergency medical technicians may be found in 64E-2.009 and 64E-2.008, Florida Administrative Code, respectively.

² Florida Department of Health, Division of Medical Quality Assurance Annual Report 2005-2006.

Medical directors must supervise and assume direct responsibility for the medical performance of the emergency medical technicians and paramedics, and must perform duties including advising, consulting, training, counseling, and overseeing of services. This includes appropriate quality assurance but does not include administrative or managerial functions. Each medical director is required to establish a quality assurance committee to provide reviews of all emergency medical technicians and paramedics operating under the director's supervision.

Physician Assistants

Sections 458.347(7), and 459.022(7), F.S., govern the licensure of physician assistants in Florida. Physician assistants are licensed by the department and are regulated by the Florida Board of Medicine or the Florida Board of Osteopathic Medicine. Among other requirements, an applicant for licensure as a physician assistant must demonstrate passage of the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants examination and submit certification of completion of a physician assistant training program. Fees for licensure and renewal are set in statute. Applicants for renewal must complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years or hold a current certification issued by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants.

There are currently 3,675 active, licensed physician assistants practicing in the state of Florida.³

Paramedic Certification for Physicians, Dentists, and Nurses

Section 401.27(7), F. S., authorizes a physician, dentist, or registered nurse to be certified as a paramedic if the practitioner is certified as an emergency medical technician and successfully completes the emergency medical technician course, the paramedic examination, and an advanced cardiac life support course. However, a physician, dentist, or registered nurse is not required to complete the paramedic training course.

Once certified as a paramedic, physicians, dentists, and registered nurses are still subject to all criteria for licensure and renewal of licensure in their respective practice acts.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill extends the paramedic training course exemption for practitioners contained in s. 401.27(7), F.S., to physician assistants. Physician assistants would be subject to the same process for certification as other practitioners listed in s. 401.27(7), F.S. In addition, physician assistants are licensed by the department and thus would be subject to all criteria for licensure or renewal of licensure as a physician assistant while certified as a paramedic.

According to department staff, certification of physician assistants as paramedics will not increase the workload for department staff and consequently will not result in a significant fiscal impact on the department.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Amends s. 401.27, F.S., to allow physician assistants to be certified as paramedics.

Section 2: Provides for an effective date of July 1, 2007.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

³ The Florida Department of Health, Division of Medical Quality Assurance Annual Report 2005-2006.

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

This bill will have no impact on municipalities and the counties under the requirements of Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

No additional rule-making authority is required as a result of this bill.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

N/A.

D. STATEMENT OF THE SPONSOR

No statement submitted.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COUNCIL SUBSTITUTE CHANGES