

Client name James D. Daniel
Form Montana Licensing Task Force
Matter James D. Daniel - Rules
Sent February 11, 2026 at 12:34 PM
Due
Submitted February 11, 2026 at 12:34 PM

James D. Daniel

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Montana Licensing Task Force

This Task Force was created pursuant to Executive Order 1-2026 on January 29, 2026.

Purpose of the Advisory Council

The Task Force shall provide the Governor with recommendations and strategies for the State of Montana to reform the professional occupational licensing system for the purposes of:

- identifying and removing burdens and barriers faced by licensees that are not necessary to protect the public; and
- improving access to and availability of professional services for citizens across Montana, including rural communities.

In developing recommendations and strategies, the Task Force shall seek input from Montana citizens, legislators, Montana associations whose members are licensed occupational professionals, professional licensing boards, relevant state agencies, advisory groups and researchers focused on occupational licensing, and other appropriate stakeholders as determined by the Task Force.

Public Record

Please note that all information received through this form is public record.

Which committee would you like to receive your comment?

Full Task Force
Construction Subcommittee
Barriers Subcommittee
Sunset Review Subcommittee

We want to hear from you!

We would like to receive any comments you would like the Task Force, or one of its subcommittees, to review. In addition, we are specifically looking for feedback for:

1. Specific topics a committee or the task force should consider, and
2. Specific people or organizations you think the task force should hear from.

Do you have a general comment or a specific person or topic for the Task Force to hear from?

General comment

What are your comments?

This is a request to continue efforts to reform licensing laws for barbers and cosmetologists and to create a modern system that allows both licensed and unlicensed practitioners to participate in our economy. Occupational licensing harms the economy and restricts millions of opportunities in our workforce, increasing costs upwards of 200\$ billion annually, whereas those freedoms for workers once existed, occupational licensing now impacts almost all American workers, and has become a great impediment to freedom, opportunity, and economic liberty in Montana as well as across the country. In this regards, efforts have been made to reform laws, hair braiders have in most states become unregulated, and we would urge lawmakers here to continue those efforts and go further so as to include many other services related to the industry. As seen in other industry's like the construction and across many states, a registration system can replace the licensing system and serve as similar protection without restricting opportunities for workers as seen in Montana, Washington, and Pennsylvania, which I would urge lawmakers to study, and we would then urge lawmakers here to adopt reforms such as these to increase opportunities and reduce the harms resulting from licensing laws. The result can better improve our economy and better utilize all of Americas talented workforce, also ensuring our markets are free and open as possible, and deem it to be a proposal worthy of consideration and worthy of maintaining our title of a nation and "land of freedom".

Client name Marie Francis
Form Montana Licensing Reform Task Force
Matter Marie Francis - Rules
Sent February 16, 2026 at 11:04 PM
Due
Submitted February 16, 2026 at 11:04 PM

Marie Francis

Date of birth		Company	Department of Veterans health Administration
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Montana Licensing Reform Task Force

This Task Force was created pursuant to Executive Order 1-2026 on January 29, 2026.

Purpose of the Licensing Reform Task Force

The Task Force shall provide the Governor with recommendations and strategies for the State of Montana to reform the professional occupational licensing system for the purposes of:

- identifying and removing burdens and barriers faced by licensees that are not necessary to protect the public; and
- improving access to and availability of professional services for citizens across Montana, including rural communities.

In developing recommendations and strategies, the Task Force shall seek input from Montana citizens, legislators, Montana associations whose members are licensed occupational professionals, professional licensing boards, relevant state agencies, advisory groups and researchers focused on occupational licensing, and other appropriate stakeholders as determined by the Task Force.

Public Record

Please note that all information received through this form is public record.

Which committee would you like to receive your comment?

Full Task Force
Health Care Subcommittee
Barriers Subcommittee
Sunset Review Subcommittee

We want to hear from you!

We would like to receive any comments you would like the Task Force, or one of its subcommittees, to review. In addition, we are specifically looking for feedback for:

1. Specific topics a committee or the task force should consider, and
2. Specific people or organizations you think the task force should hear from.

Do you have a general comment or a specific person or topic for the Task Force to hear from?

Specific person or topic

What are your comments?

I would like to address the newly appointed licensing taskforce regarding a competency-based LPN pathway for experienced CNAs to help Montana's nursing shortage. Attn: Kristin McColly and Healthcare Subcommittees

Dear Ms. McColly,

My name is Marie Francis, and I have worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant in Montana for more than 30 years. I have had the honor of providing direct bedside care to our nation's veterans at the Montana VA Medical Center in Helena and caring for residents in skilled nursing at Elkhorn Healthcare in Clancy, Montana.

My entire career has been devoted to hands-on care — assisting with activities of daily living, observing and reporting changes in condition, supporting care plans, and advocating for residents and their families. I have also completed Medication Aide training and am a Certified, Montana-licensed Pharmacy Technician, which has strengthened my knowledge of medication safety and the nursing scope of practice. Long-term care is where experienced CNAs are most needed, and it is where I have dedicated my life's work.

I am writing in strong support of the Board's efforts to explore licensing changes that expand opportunity while maintaining public safety. I respectfully ask you to consider a competency-based pathway that would allow highly experienced CNAs to challenge the Licensed Practical Nurse examination.

Montana's own workforce data clearly shows why "grow-your-own" advancement pathways are urgently needed:

Montana is projected to have about 750 job openings for nursing assistants every year through 2032 — the largest number of openings among all nursing occupations — and 97% of those openings are due to turnover, not new positions.

Demand for healthcare workers continues to exceed supply, with more than 1,700 healthcare job postings per month, and rural communities are losing nurses and direct-care staff to larger cities.

21% of LPNs are no longer working in healthcare, representing a major untapped workforce that could be re-engaged through flexible career pathways.

Workforce shortages are identified by state leadership as one of the biggest threats to healthcare access in Montana, especially in long-term care and rural areas.

These numbers reflect what those of us at the bedside experience every day.

At the same time, experienced CNAs face significant barriers to becoming nurses:

Limited program availability in rural areas

Long waitlists

Financial constraints while working full-time

Repetition of entry-level content we have safely practiced for decades

After 30 years in direct patient care — including service to Montana's veterans — I am not asking for standards to be lowered.

I am asking for experience to be recognized as a valid measure of competency.

Other states already use experience-based pathways to practical nurse licensure while maintaining NCLEX and safety standards. For example:

California allows an equivalent method for practical nurse licensure based on documented paid bedside experience and pharmacology coursework.

Florida and Georgia provide LPN pathways for highly trained military medics and corpsmen based on prior clinical experience.

Several states, including Missouri and New York, recognize prior healthcare training and experience as a component of practical nurse eligibility.

Creating a similar pathway in Montana for long-tenured CNAs would:

Directly address long-term-care staffing shortages

Retain experienced caregivers at the bedside

Reduce educational bottlenecks

Strengthen rural healthcare access

Reward decades of safe, skilled practice

Improve continuity and quality of care for residents and veterans

Montana's healthcare workforce reports specifically recommend building local, "grow-your-own" training pipelines and stackable credentials to retain workers in our communities. An experience-based LPN pathway for CNAs is exactly that kind of solution.

I have spent 30 years caring for Montana's most vulnerable citizens. I am committed to continuing to serve, to advancing in my profession, and to being part of the solution to our state's workforce challenges.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering innovative, competency-based pathways that recognize the value of experience. I would be honored to participate in stakeholder discussions or provide testimony if the newly appointed licensing taskforce continues this work.

Respectfully,

Marie Francis CNA CPHT

Certified Nursing Assistant – 30 years

Medication Aide Training Completed

Certified, Montana-Licensed Pharmacy Technician

Montana VA Medical Center – Helena

Elkhorn Healthcare – Clancy, Montana

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