

Licensing Reform Task Force Barriers Subcommittee

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: NATIONAL CERTIFICATION STREAMLINING

Recommendation

The **Barriers Subcommittee** recommends that the **Licensing Reform Task Force** request that the **Department of Labor & Industry** and each professional and occupational licensing board review licensing statutes, rules, application forms, and workflows for professions where **national certification, national accreditation, or national examination** supplies the core qualification review.

The purpose of this recommendation is to **streamline Montana's licensing process** where a national certifying or accrediting body already verifies education, training, examination, or other core qualifications. This recommendation is not intended to remove licensure where Montana oversight remains necessary. Instead, the review should identify opportunities to reduce duplicative documentation, avoid redundant review, update outdated statutory references, and preserve only Montana-specific requirements that are necessary for public protection.

Executive Order No. 1-2026 Report Elements Addressed

This recommendation supports the Executive Order's direction that the Task Force provide recommendations and strategies to reform Montana's professional occupational licensing system by:

- **Identifying and removing burdens and barriers faced by licensees that are not necessary to protect the public.** Streamlining can reduce duplicative documentation and review when national certification already establishes core qualifications.
- **Improving access to and availability of professional services for citizens across Montana, including rural communities.** Faster and clearer licensing workflows can help qualified professionals enter Montana's workforce sooner.
- **Evaluating whether unnecessary barriers to entry exist for applicants.** The review would identify whether applicants must resubmit proof of education, examination, or certification already verified by a national body.
- **Evaluating whether an occupation or profession requires a specialized skill or training for which nationally recognized standards of education and training exist.** This recommendation directly addresses professions that rely on nationally recognized certification, accreditation, or examination standards.
- **Evaluating whether qualifications for licensure are justified.** The review would distinguish between qualification requirements that add Montana-specific value and requirements that duplicate national certification processes.

- **Evaluating whether existing licensing requirements contribute to workforce shortages or access constraints in rural and frontier communities.** Reducing duplicative processing may support workforce access without eliminating licensure or lowering public-protection standards.

Policy Assessment

Benefits

This recommendation focuses on process improvement rather than deregulation. It may reduce applicant burden, staff workload, processing time, and confusion where national certification or accreditation already verifies education, training, or examination requirements. It also gives boards a structured way to identify which Montana-specific requirements remain necessary, such as jurisprudence, scope-of-practice, background-check, discipline, title-protection, complaint, or continuing-competency requirements.

Limitations

National certification does not always address Montana-specific law, scope of practice, supervision, discipline, complaints, or consumer protection. Some national certifying bodies may change names, standards, or procedures, and some may not provide the same transparency or accountability as state licensing. The review should therefore streamline duplicative steps without automatically eliminating state licensure or Montana oversight.

Implementation Consideration

The review should identify statutes that name specific national certifying or accrediting entities and determine whether the statute should be updated to include “or successor” language or replaced with a more flexible approval standard. For example, Montana’s acupuncture licensure statute requires graduation from a nationally approved school and passage of a national examination. See 37-13-302, MCA. Similar statutes should be reviewed to determine whether Montana can rely on national verification while simplifying the state application process.

Motion

The **Barriers Subcommittee** moves to advance the recommendation requesting that the Department of Labor & Industry and each professional and occupational licensing board review licensing statutes, rules, application forms, and workflows for professions where national certification, national accreditation, or national examination supplies the core qualification review, and identify opportunities to streamline the Montana licensing process by reducing duplicative documentation, relying on national verification where appropriate, updating outdated statutory references, and preserving Montana-specific requirements necessary for public protection.