

# Legislative Analysis

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## EXTEND SUNSET FOR CANADIAN NURSES AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

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**House Bill 6253 as introduced**  
**Sponsor: Rep. Edward Gaffney, Jr.**  
**Committee: Health Policy**

### **First Analysis (9-6-06)**

**BRIEF SUMMARY:** The bill would extend by five years the ability of Canadian health care professionals, including RNs, to obtain licenses to practice in Michigan through an expedited process.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Enactment of the bill would allow these provisions to continue to ease a shortage of health professionals in Michigan, which aids in management of health care costs to the state. If the provisions are allowed to sunset, there may be financial implications that may increase state costs for medical care.

### **THE APPARENT PROBLEM:**

In an effort to address the chronic shortages of registered professional nurses (RNs) and other health care professionals (doctors, radiologists, x-ray technicians, etc.) in Michigan hospitals, clinics, and physician practices, legislation allowing an expedited process for Canadian licensed health care professionals was enacted several years ago.

Public Act 256 of 2000 amended the Public Health Code to provide a temporary nursing license for Canadian nurses so that they could work as RNs while completing the lengthy process required of foreign-educated nurses for eligibility to sit for the state licensure exam. In 2002, Public Act 441 was enacted to extend the health code's endorsement procedure to licensed Canadian health care professionals that previously had been reserved for individuals licensed, registered, or certified in a specialty by other states and who were now seeking state licensure, registration, or specialty certification.

However, both Public Act 256 and Public Act 441 contained sunsets. Public Act 3 of 2004, which also created a system of licensure for respiratory therapists, extended the sunsets for both provisions (the Canadian nurses and the Canadian health care professionals) to January 1, 2007. Since the shortage of nurses and health care professionals continues to plague Michigan health care employers, legislation is needed to once again extend the sunset for both provisions.

### **THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:**

The bill would amend the Public Health Code (MCL 333.16181 and 333.16186) to extend, until January 1, 2012, the ability of Canadians licensed as health care practitioners to apply for licensure in this state by endorsement and for Canadians

licensed as registered professional nurses who have applied for licensure under the code to obtain temporary RN licenses that allow them to practice nursing during the license application process. Currently, these provisions will expire January 1, 2007.

***ARGUMENTS:***

***For:***

According to testimony offered before the committee from members of the health care industry, hospitals throughout the state continue to experience severe shortages of nurses and other health care professionals. According to the Detroit Medical Center, Canadian employees represent approximately 12 percent (over 550 employees) of its nursing and allied health professional population. St. John Health reports that 45 percent of the nurses employed at the St. John Detroit Riverview Hospital commute daily from Canada. These nurses and allied health care professionals, such as occupational and physical therapists, pharmacists, laboratory technicians, and radiology and special imaging technologists, are highly capable and provide quality care. To allow the temporary nurse program and endorsement procedure for licensed Canadian health care professionals to expire would create a staffing nightmare that would negatively impact the ability of affected hospitals to provide needed care to patients. Extending the sunset provisions for five more years will give those in the health care arena more time to address the complex problems contributing to the nationwide shortage of nurses and allied health care professionals.

***POSITIONS:***

The Department of Community Health indicated support for the bill. (9-5-06)

Detroit Medical Center (DMC) supports the bill. (9-5-06)

St. John Health supports the bill. (9-5-06)

Beaumont Hospitals support the bill. (9-5-06)

Karmanos Cancer Institute indicated support for the bill. (9-5-06)

The Michigan Health and Hospital Association indicated support for the bill. (9-5-06)

The Michigan Nurses Association indicated support for the bill. (9-5-06)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.