

HB294 INTRODUCED



1 HB294
2 JPUSTYN-1
3 By Representatives Bracy, Chestnut, Givan, Hollis, Warren,
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7 RFD: Education Policy
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SYNOPSIS:

This bill would create the Alabama Professional Workforce Protection Act.

This bill would establish a state list of professional careers based on advanced education, licensing requirements, and critical workforce need.

This bill would also mandate that individuals serving in professional careers are eligible for state workforce development programs, scholarships, loan repayment programs, and initiatives.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to professional and occupational licensing; to create the Alabama Professional Workforce Protection Act; to provide legislative findings; to establish a state list of professional careers that recognizes certain occupations removed from the federal classification of professional degree programs; to support Alabama workforce development in fields related to professional careers; and to mandate that individuals serving in professional careers are eligible for state workforce development programs, scholarships, loan



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repayment programs, and initiatives.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the Alabama Professional Workforce Protection Act.

(b) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) This state relies on a broad array of highly skilled and licensed occupations that require advanced education, internships, clinical rotations, supervised practice, or board certification.

(2) Recent federal actions have narrowed the definition of professional degree programs, excluding several occupations long recognized as professional fields.

(3) These occupations, including nursing, education, mental health, allied health, public health, engineering, architecture, accounting, and others, are critical to Alabama's health care, educational success, public safety, and economic competitiveness.

(4) Alabama faces workforce shortages in many of these areas and has a compelling state interest in recognizing and supporting these professions.

(5) This state should affirm the status of these occupations as professional careers to protect workforce pipelines and ensure access to state-level incentives, scholarships, and workforce development programs.

(c) For the purposes of state law, state workforce development programs, state-supported scholarships, career incentive programs, and any state initiative referring to



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professional occupations, the following shall be recognized as professional careers in this state:

(1) Nursing including, but not limited to, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, advanced practice nurses, nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and nurse midwives.

(2) Assistants to physicians.

(3) Physical therapists and occupational therapists.

(4) Speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

(5) Social workers including, but not limited to, licensed bachelor social workers, licensed master social workers, and licensed independent clinical social workers.

(6) Mental health counselors including, but not limited to, licensed professional counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, clinical counselors, and school counselors.

(7) Teachers, educators, and administrative staff, including preK-12 educators and principals and higher education faculty and administrators.

(8) Public health professionals, including MPH and DrPH.

(9) Architecture and design professionals including, but not limited to, licensed architects.

(10) Accounting professionals including, but not limited to, certified public accountants.

(11) Engineering professionals in all major fields.

(12) Individuals who work in allied health professions including, but not limited to, respiratory therapy, radiology sciences, laboratory sciences, dental hygiene, and others who require licensing, certification, or accredited professional



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training.

(13) Any additional occupation determined by the Alabama Department of Workforce, in consultation with the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, to meet the criteria of advanced education, licensing, and critical workforce need.

(d) All professional careers listed in subsection (c) are eligible for:

(1) State workforce development grants and initiatives referencing professional fields.

(2) State-funded scholarship and loan repayment programs available to professional careers.

(3) Strategic workforce planning reports and statewide economic development plans that classify occupations by professional category.

(e) Nothing in this section shall modify, reduce, or alter the authority or requirements of any state professional or occupational licensing board, agency, or commission.

Section 2. This act shall become effective on October 1, 2026.