

## HB294 INTRODUCED



1 HB294

2 JPUSTYN-1

3 By Representatives Bracy, Chestnut, Givan, Hollis, Warren,  
4 Hall, Ensler, Morris, Gray, Lawrence, McCampbell, Jones,  
5 Datcher, Tillman, Clarke, Moore (M), McClammy, Hendrix,  
6 Hassell, Drummond

7 RFD: Education Policy

8 First Read: 20-Jan-26



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4       SYNOPSIS:

5               This bill would create the Alabama Professional  
6               Workforce Protection Act.

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

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

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16               A BILL

17               TO BE ENTITLED

18               AN ACT

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

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29 repayment programs, and initiatives.

30 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

62 (2) Assistants to physicians.

63 (3) Physical therapists and occupational therapists.

64 (4) Speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

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

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

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

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

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

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

80 (11) Engineering professionals in all major fields.

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



85 training.

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

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

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

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

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

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

102 Section 2. This act shall become effective on October  
103 1, 2026.