



House Appropriations Subcommittee on Articles VI, VII, and VIII
Texas Medical Board
Written Testimony of Andrew J. Widmer, MD
Texas Medical Association
Feb. 22, 2023

Chairman Walle and members of the subcommittee, in this testimony I am representing the more than 57,000 physician and medical student members of the Texas Medical Association.

I am an internist practicing in Temple. I graduated from the Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine and completed my residency training at Texas A&M/Baylor Scott & White Health in Temple.

Texas needs a lot more physicians. Having a well-run, efficient, and adequately staffed and resourced Texas Medical Board is essential for meeting our state's physician recruitment and retention needs.

The board has been trying to keep up. In recent years, Texas has reached historic records time and again in the number of new medical licenses processed and issued. This trend continues. Last fiscal year, **TMB issued 6,600 new medical licenses**. Not only is this an historic record, the 1,300-license increase from the previous year marks the **second highest single-year numerical increase since 1983**. At that time, there was a single-year increase of 1,600, largely a result of Canadian physicians moving to the state when Canada converted to nationalized medicine.

In addition, the board processes license renewals for 85,000 medical licenses over two years, and tens of thousands more for the other health professions it regulates.

We are used to big numbers in Texas, but to appreciate the size of the increase in newly licensed physicians last year, the 6,600 new licensees represent more than the ENTIRE physician workforce in 21 individual U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Since Texas passed tort reform legislation 20 years ago, the state has issued a cumulative total of 75,000 new medical licenses.

Participating in the Interstate Medical Licensing Compact is good for Texas, but it generates more work for the board – evaluating applications from those seeking a medical license in Texas and Texas doctors who want to be certified for licenses in other states. The new emphasis on telemedicine also places more demands on the board for licenses. And it is not just licenses, it is also imperative to have a fair disciplinary process for physicians while also protecting the public. A strong medical board also is important for preserving the state's tort reform laws.

TMA **strongly urges** your favorable consideration of the board's requests for exceptional item funding for adequate staffing, sufficient operational resources, a strong Physician Health Program, and a fair disciplinary process in 2024-25. TMA supports the collection of physician licensing fees to fund the medical board. The board does not retain any of the fees it collects, and the state appropriation is an average of 40% of the amount of revenues collected. The board is requesting an appropriation equal to 60% of its revenues; this is more than the current 40% and it is comparable to other licensing agencies.

TMA **supports an appropriation equal to at least 60% of the board's revenues**. It is not feasible to continue processing record numbers of licenses and renewals with no staffing increase. Funding for necessary growth makes good sense for the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of Texas physicians and their patients.

^^^