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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
BUSINESS, PROFESSIONS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
Senator Angelique Ashby, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 1307 **Hearing Date:** June 15, 2026  
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**Version:** June 3, 2026  
**Urgency:** No **Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Yeaphana La Marr

**Subject:** Licensed Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program

**SUMMARY:** Revises and recasts the statutory framework for the Licensed Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program (Mexico Dentists Program). Updates various requirements of the existing pilot program relating to temporary state licensure of licensed dentists from Mexico who work for a federally qualified health facility that has at least one health professional shortage area or dental professional shortage area within its service area in California.

**Existing law:**

- 1) Establishes the Dental Practice Act (Act). (Business and Professions Code (BPC) §§ 1600 et seq.)
- 2) Establishes the Dental Board of California (DBC or Board) within the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to administer and enforce the Dental Practice Act (Act). (BPC § 1601.1)
- 3) Requires each applicant for licensure under the Act to furnish either fingerprint cards or a copy of a completed Live Scan form for submission to state and federal criminal justice agencies to establish the identity of the applicant and to determine whether the applicant has a record of any criminal convictions in this state or in any other jurisdiction, including foreign countries. (BPC § 1629(a))
- 4) Establishes the Mexico Dentists Program which requires the Board to issue a three-year non-renewable permit to practice dentistry to no more than 30 dentists from Mexico who meet specified criteria. (BPC § 1645.4)
- 5) Requires dentists in the pilot program to meet one of the following sets of requirements:
  - a) Be a graduate from the National Autonomous University of Mexico School of Faculty Dentistry (Facultad de Odontología); meet all criteria for licensure in Mexico, including a minimum grade point average, specified English language comprehension, passage of a general examination, and passage of an oral interview; and enroll in and complete an orientation program that focuses on coursework including pharmacology, pathology, infection control, and sedation techniques, all taught by California dental school instructors, along with introductions to health care systems in California and community clinic operations.

- b) Graduate within the three year period before enrollment in the program, from a foreign dental school that has received provisional approval or certification by November 2003 from the Board under the Foreign Dental School Approval Program; enroll and satisfactorily complete an orientation program that focuses on the health care system and community clinic operations in California; and enroll and satisfactorily complete a course taught by an approved foreign dental school on infection control approved by the Board. (BPC § 1645.4(e))
- 6) Limits employment of dentists in the Mexico Dentists Program to nonprofit community health centers. (BPC § 1645.4(f))
- 7) Sets the fee for a three-year nonrenewable permit at \$548. (BPC § 1645.4(g))
- 8) Requires the Board to terminate a three-year nonrenewable permit if the Board determines that either the permit was issued by mistake or a complaint has been received against the permitholder that warrants termination pending an investigation. (BPC § 1645.4(h))
- 9) Requires dentists in the Mexico Dentists Program to apply for a three-year visa and Social Security number (SSN) within 14 days of receiving a permit and to provide the SSN within 10 days of obtaining it, and prohibits the participant from engaging in the practice of dentistry until these conditions are met. (BPC § 1645.4(i))
- 10) Provides that all applicable employment benefits, salary, and policies provided by nonprofit community health centers to their current employees shall be provided to medical and dental practitioners from Mexico participating in the Mexico Dentists Program and that nonprofit community health centers must provide malpractice insurance coverage. (BPC § 1645.4(j))
- 11) Requires an evaluation of the program commencing 12 months after implementation, performed by a California dental school or independent consultant, and requires that evaluation to include specified issues including the quality of care and impact on cultural and linguistic services. (BPC § 1645.4(k))
- 12) Provides that the costs for administering the Mexico Dentists Program shall be secured from philanthropic entities. (BPC § 1645.4(l))
- 13) Requires Mexico Dentists Program applicants to be responsible for working with the governments of Mexico and the United States in order to obtain the necessary three-year visa required for program participation. (BPC § 1645.4(m))

**This bill:**

- 1) Repeals the existing Mexico Dentists Program and replaces it with a revised Mexico Dentists Program that still requires the Board to issue a three-year non-renewable permit to practice dentistry to no more than 30 dentists from Mexico who meet specified criteria and submit documents to the Board establishing evidence of meeting that criteria, as specified.

- 2) Requires the Board to maintain an alternate list of program applicants from which the Board is required to choose an alternate participant if a participant leaves the program for any reason, clarifying reference to the Program in existing law.
- 3) Maintains many of the same educational and clinical training requirements in the existing Mexico Dentists Program statutory framework but moves from naming a specific educational institution to instead require eligible participants to have graduated from a dental program accredited by either Consejo Nacional de Educación Odontológica, A.C. or Comités Interinstitucionales para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior. Specifies that participants must complete a Board-approved orientation program, rather than just an orientation program, as outlined in existing law. Requires participants to complete an eight-hour infection control program approved by the Board and pass the California Dental Law and Ethics Examination before engaging in the practice of dentistry.
- 4) Requires the Board to issue a license to an applicant who has not provided an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) or Social Security Number (SSN) if the Board determines: 1) the applicant is otherwise eligible for a license and 2) the applicant provides evidence that they have sought an appropriate three-year visa and the accompanying social security number.
- 5) Sets the fee for a three-year nonrenewable permit at \$1,002.
- 6) Provides that the three-year period for a license commences on the first day the participant engages in the practice of dentistry.
- 7) Requires participants to comply with continuing education requirements, including eight hours of infection control continuing dental education within three months of receiving a license.
- 8) Assigns representatives from California and the National Autonomous University of Mexico who executed and implemented the provisions of the former Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program as the points of contact for all of the following:
  - a) Securing required documents.
  - b) Recruiting and vetting candidates.
  - c) Assisting candidates for this program in Mexico in meeting all program requirements.
  - d) Selecting appropriate federally qualified health centers throughout California.
  - e) Ensuring compliance with program provisions.
  - f) Developing policy and clinical workshops.
  - g) Monitoring productivity and increased access to dental care.

- h) Assessing the necessity of policy and programmatic improvements.
  - i) Working with the governments of Mexico and the United States to obtain the visas required for program participation.
- 9) Limits participation to federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) that have at least one health professional shortage area or dental professional shortage area within its service area, has dental quality assurance protocols, and meets other specified criteria.
- 10) Requires a FQHC that employs a participant to do all of the following:
- a) Continue peer review protocols and procedures required by the federal government.
  - b) Work with a dental school in California approved by the Board to conduct 10 secondary peer reviews of randomly selected patient encounters with each participant per six-month period and transmit complete records of those encounters to the dental school.
  - c) Provide all applicable employment benefits, salary, and policies to the participant as it provides to other current employees, including, but not limited to, malpractice insurance.
- 11) Requires either 1) a dental school in California and the National Autonomous University of Mexico or a foreign dental school approved by the Board or 2) an independent consultant selected by the Director of DCA, beginning one year after the program has commenced, to conduct an evaluation of the program, fully paid for by funds provided by philanthropic foundations, to include, but not be limited to, the:
- a) Quality of care provided by participants.
  - b) Adaptability of participants to California dental standards.
  - c) Impact on working and administrative environments in the federally qualified health centers employing participants.
  - d) Impact on interpersonal relations with dental licensed counterparts in the federally qualified health centers employing participants.
  - e) Responses by patients of participants.
  - f) Impact on cultural and linguistic services.
  - g) Increases in dental encounters provided by participants with various patient populations.
  - h) Increases in the number of various patient populations seeking dental services from federally qualified health centers.

- 12) Requires the cost for administering the program to be fully paid for by funds provided by philanthropic foundations.
- 13) Defines several terms applicable to the Mexico Dentists Program.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill is keyed fiscal by Legislative Counsel. According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, the Board estimates costs of \$334,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2026-27, \$318,000 in FY 2027-28, and \$159,000 annually, ongoing, to fund one permanent Associate Governmental Program Analyst (AGPA) and one limited term AGPA to research, review, and respond to written correspondence, provide analytical guidance, and prepare written correspondence to the applicant identifying specific deficiencies, among other things. This bill requires costs be paid through philanthropic foundations. In addition, the DCA Office of Information Services estimates absorbable costs of \$72,000 to create a new license type in its online licensing and enforcement system.

In the Assembly Committee on Appropriations analysis for the previous bill that substantially updated the Mexico Dentists Program for the first time in many years, AB 2860 (Garcia, Chapter 246, Statutes of 2024), the Board did not anticipate a fiscal impact, since required funding from philanthropic entities to implement the Mexico Dentists Program had not yet materialized. The bill was referred from the Senate Committee on Appropriations directly to the Senate Floor, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, indicating that the Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee determined the measure's fiscal effects were not significant and did not warrant further fiscal committee consideration. Measures proceeding under Rule 28.8 are generally understood to have low fiscal impacts. Philanthropic funds to implement the Mexico Dentists Program have still not yet materialized and the Mexico Dentists Program has still not yet been implemented, so it is unclear how the fiscal estimate for this bill was calculated, considering the fiscal estimate for a similar bill only two years ago.

#### **COMMENTS:**

1. **Purpose.** This bill is sponsored by Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas. The Author of this bill states, "California is home to one of the largest dentist workforces in the nation, yet over 2.7 million Californians live in areas that have limited access to dental health professionals. The majority of which live in rural, low-income communities that are predominantly Latino.

AB 1307 expands access to dental health professional by establishing the Licensed Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program, allowing 30 qualified dentists from Mexico to obtain a time-limited license and visa to practice in federally qualified health centers.

These dentists must meet rigorous educational, licensing, and language standards to ensure high-quality, culturally competent care. This bill is modeled after a successful physician pilot program and reflects our state's commitment to health equity. AB 1307 offers a targeted, cost-neutral solution to reduce disparities and improve oral health outcomes for some of California's most vulnerable populations."

## 2. Background.

*Licensed Dentists in California.* To obtain a dental license in California, applicants to the Dental Board are required to: furnish satisfactory evidence of having graduated from a board-approved dental college; successfully pass a written license examination (National Board of Dental Examination of the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations); successfully take an examination in California Law and Ethics; successfully pass a practical exam of dental skills and diagnosis-treatment planning; submit fingerprints for the purposed of conducting a background check; and furnish evidence of liability insurance for any injuries sustained as a result of the applicant's taking of the practical licensure examination, among other requirements.

Out-of-country unlicensed applicants may be issued a license to practice in California if they have been issued a diploma from a foreign dental school accredited by a body that has a reciprocal accreditation agreement with any commission or accreditation organization whose findings are accepted by the board so long as the applicant has been issued a degree of Doctor of Dental Medicine or Doctor of Dental Surgery and provides evidence of completion of the full number of academic years of undergraduate courses required for graduation and that the applicant has been issued a dental diploma or degree to the Board (BPC § 1628).

Additionally, if an out of country applicant holds a valid and unrestricted license from another U.S. state or territory, and meets the clinical practice requirements, or can secure a two-year full-time contract with an approved dental school or community/public clinic, they may qualify for licensure through the Licensure by Credential pathway (BPC § 1635.5).

This bill builds upon the existing pathway to licensure in California for a very limited number of currently licensed dentists from Mexico to allow these licensed professionals to serve limited term tenures in critically underserved areas where cultural competency is severely needed.

*Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program.* The Mexico Pilot Program, established by AB 1045 (Firebaugh, Chapter 1157, Statutes of 2002), was designed to bring licensed physicians and dentists from Mexico with rural experience, who speak the language, understand the culture, and know how to apply this knowledge in serving the large Latino communities in rural areas who have limited or no access to primary health care services. AB 1045 authorized up to 30 licensed physicians specializing in family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology and up to 30 licensed dentists from Mexico to practice medicine or dentistry in California for up to three years, and required the individuals to meet certain requirements related to training and education. Proponents of the measure were concerned about addressing primary care physician and dentist shortages while maintaining a high quality of care. The bill specified that any funding necessary for the implementation of the Mexico Pilot Program, including the evaluation and oversight functions, was to be secured from nonprofit philanthropic entities and further stated that implementation of the program could not move forward unless appropriate funding was secured from nonprofit philanthropic entities.

The Medical Board of California (MBC) received the necessary philanthropic funding in 2018 to initiate the program and began taking the necessary steps for implementation. As of April 2019, MBC began accepting applications for the Mexico Pilot Program. MBC received the required funding commitments necessary for program implementation in December 2020. In August 2022, the Center for Reducing Health Disparities (CRHD) at the University of California, Davis released its first annual progress report of the Mexico Pilot Program.

In 2024, AB 2860 (Garcia, Chapter 246) recast the Mexico Pilot Program to create two distinct programs, the Licensed Physicians from Mexico Program (Mexico Physicians Program) in the Medical Practice Act, and the Mexico Dentists Program in the Dental Practice Act and made various updates and conforming changes.

Despite the statutory framework for the Mexico Dentists Program being in existence for over 20 years, DBC has not implemented a program. The Mexico Physicians Program was implemented after appropriate funding was secured and appears successful in meeting the needs of medical patients in areas where cultural competency is a factor in health care outcomes, as described by an independent evaluation conducted by the University of Davis School of Medicine Center for the Study of Health Disparities.

3. **Related Legislation.** AB 2860 (Garcia, Chapter 246, Statutes of 2024) reestablished the Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program as the distinct Licensed Physicians from Mexico Program and Licensed Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program and revised various requirements contained within the existing pilot program relating to the temporary state licensure of medical professionals from Mexico.

AB 2864 (Garcia, Chapter 247, Statutes of 2024) requires the MBC to extend the licenses of physicians participating in the Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program by an additional three years.

AB 1395 (Garcia Chapter 205, Statutes of 2023) requires the MBC to issue a license to applicants for participation in the Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program who did not possess federal documentation but otherwise meet the pilot program's requirements, and authorizes the MBC to extend a pilot program participant's license under certain conditions.

AB 1396 (Garcia of 2023) was substantially similar to AB 1395. (Status: This bill died in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.)

AB 1045 (Firebaugh) Chapter 1157, Statutes of 2002 established the Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program.

AB 2394 (Firebaugh, Chapter 802, Statutes of 2000) created the Task Force on Culturally and Linguistically Competent Physicians and Dentists and required its subcommittee to examine the feasibility of establishing a pilot program that would allow Mexican and Caribbean licensed physicians and dentists to practice in nonprofit community health centers in California's medically underserved areas.

4. **Arguments in Support.** The Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas (sponsor) writes, “the introductory statements of fact in AB 1301 underscore the decades-long shortage of dentists in rural and working-poor communities throughout California. The poor distribution and shortage of dentists in the state is exacerbated by the lack of culturally and linguistically competent dentists to serve the Latino community, 40 percent of the state’s population, of which more than 20 percent of persons do not speak English. Based on the evaluation of the Doctors from Mexico Pilot Program by the University of Davis School of Medicine Center for the Study of Health Disparities, AB 1307 can be as successful as the Doctors from Mexico Pilot Program proved.”
  
5. **Dental Board Comments.** DBC submitted comments on the current version of the bill, many of which appear to be resolved by other general provisions in the Dental Practice Act. For example, DBC states that absent specific fingerprinting authority provisions, the “Board would not receive subsequent arrest or conviction notifications during the three-year license period.” However, all licensees, which participants in the Mexico Dentists Program would be, are already subject to specific requirements for fingerprinting. The Board also requests “clear statutory authority to impose intermediate sanctions (such as probation or practice restrictions) in addition to termination, and confirmation that the Board retains full disciplinary authority under Article 4 throughout the three-year period.” The Board has enforcement authority for its licensees; Mexico Dentists Program participants will be licensees. While the pathway may vary slightly in terms of allowing individuals who are already licensed in another country to become licensed in California, nothing in the existing statutory framework or conforming changes provided in this bill will change the Board’s authority for any of its licensees. The Board also notes that “While the Dental Board has general regulatory authority, there is no explicit language in the current bill granting the Board authority to adopt regulations.” The Board can adopt necessary regulations to effectively implement this program.

Additionally, the Board states that this bill “does not clearly require that adequate funding be secured and committed before the Board begins incurring costs or implementing the program.” This bill is not creating a new program. Existing law clearly states that “Costs for administering this pilot program shall be secured from philanthropic entities” and the language in this bill clearly states that “The costs for administering the program shall be fully paid for by funds provided by philanthropic foundations.” MBC did not take steps to implement a Mexico Physicians Program until funding was secured; DBC can do the same. Licensees will also pay fees; fees are intended to cover the cost of being regulated and administrative steps, including licensing, that are associated with being regulated.

The Board also writes that the bill does not have a mechanism for Board or Legislative oversight of the program evaluation requirement, a requirement which is currently outlined in existing law, and similarly carried over and referenced in this bill. The Board is already subject to the comprehensive sunset review oversight effort undertaken by the Senate Business, Professions, and Economic Development Committee and Assembly Business and Professions Committee; that process allows for oversight of all aspects of the Board’s operations and the Dental Practice

Act, including the existing Mexico Dentists Program, as well as the updated statutory framework proposed by this bill.

The Board additionally provided evidence of drafting errors and conforming changes that may improve the bill and that should be corrected, including:

- Specifying that the Mexico Dentists Program takes effect six months after philanthropic funding is secured, in order to ensure that the Board's licensing system is updated.
- Ensuring that transcripts, verification of licensure, and other necessary information the Board needs to determine if a participant meets the requirements for licensure are provided to the Board from appropriate sources like educational institutions, licensing entities, and employers. The Board should also collaborate with MBC which has been effectively licensing physicians from Mexico for a number of years.
- Clarifying references to an infection control course and eliminating duplicative references and requirements for this patient safety course.
- Removing the requirement that the Board approve the orientation program for participants.

**6. Suggested Amendments and Policy Comments.** In addition to the amendments noted above, the measure also authorizes a foreign dental school approved by the Board to conduct the evaluation of the program. The Board does not approve foreign dental schools and no previously approved school will have that status after January 30, 2026. It is also unclear how Mexico Dentist Program participants would complete the California Dental Law and Ethics Examination and whether there are any added patient safeguards from imposing this requirement. Participants already have to complete an orientation program that specifically requires that the existing licensed dentist coming from Mexico that includes dental law and ethics. The Author may wish to consider whether this requirement, and the potential barriers to practice that this may impose on someone who is practicing in California for a limited time, enhance patient safety and effective practice at the FQHCs where this small number of individuals will be practicing. Further, licensure provides safeguards for patients and the program establishes numerous baseline standards aimed at ensuring quality care is provided by the program participants who are already licensed dentists. In the event that patients are harmed, the dentist will face licensing sanctions. The Author may wish to also eliminate the requirement for what will likely be a costly program evaluation and will remove licensees from patient care in order to participate.

## **SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION:**

### Support:

Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas (sponsor)

Opposition:

None received for the current version of the bill.

**-- END --**