
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1307 (Ávila Farías) - Licensed Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program

Version: July 1, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: B., P. & E.D. 10 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Janelle Miyashiro

Bill Summary: AB 1307 revises and recasts the statutory framework for the Licensed Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program (Mexico Dentists Program) by updating various temporary state licensure requirements for participating dentists who practice at California federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) located in health or dental professional shortage areas.

Fiscal Impact: The Dental Board of California (DBC) estimates a one-time cost of \$300,000 to contract with a vendor to conduct the required program evaluation. The Board will also experience a one-time workload impact to promulgate regulations, as well as ongoing workload to process applications and issue licenses. Although this bill will create a non-absorbable fiscal impact to implement and regulate the program, all costs will be covered by donations from philanthropic foundations. Workload will not begin until all required funding is received, and the bill becomes operative six months after these funds are secured. DBC will establish a new, dedicated account specifically for the Mexico Pilot Program to track all program-related revenues (including licensing fees) and expenditures.

The Office of Information Services (OIS) estimates costs of \$72,000 to create a new license type in the BreZE system. OIS notes these costs will also be paid for by philanthropic funds.

Background: 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.

AB 1045 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.

Proposed Law:

- 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 an application and supporting documents to the Board establishing evidence of meeting that criteria, as specified.
- 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.
- 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 an orientation program as outlined in existing law. Requires participants to complete an eight-hour infection control course, as specified, before engaging in the practice of dentistry.
- 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 that the applicant is otherwise eligible for a license and the applicant provides evidence that they have sought an appropriate three-year visa and the accompanying social security number.
- Sets the fee for a three-year nonrenewable permit at \$1,002.
- Provides that the three-year period for a license commences on the first day the participant engages in the practice of dentistry.

- Requires participants to comply with continuing education requirements, as specified.
- 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:
 - Securing required documents.
 - Recruiting and vetting candidates.
 - Assisting candidates for this program in Mexico in meeting all program requirements.
 - Selecting appropriate federally qualified health centers throughout California.
 - Ensuring compliance with program provisions.
 - Developing policy and clinical workshops.
 - Monitoring productivity and increased access to dental care.
 - Assessing the necessity of policy and programmatic improvements.
 - Working with the governments of Mexico and the United States to obtain the visas required for program participation.
- Limits participation to 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.
- Requires an FQHC that employs a participant to do all of the following:
 - Continue peer review protocols and procedures required by the federal government.
 - 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.
 - 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.
- Requires either a dental school in California and the National Autonomous University of Mexico or an independent consultant selected by the Director of the Department of Consumer Affairs, 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:
 - Quality of care provided by participants.

- Adaptability of participants to California dental standards.
 - Impact on working and administrative environments in the federally qualified health centers employing participants.
 - Impact on interpersonal relations with dental licensed counterparts in the federally qualified health centers employing participants.
 - Responses by patients of participants.
 - Impact on cultural and linguistic services.
 - Increases in dental encounters provided by participants with various patient populations.
 - Increases in the number of various patient populations seeking dental services from federally qualified health centers.
- Requires the cost for administering the program to be fully paid for by funds provided by philanthropic foundations.
 - Defines several terms applicable to the Mexico Dentists Program.
 - Provides that the Mexico Dentists Program becomes operative six months after the Board receives written confirmation that the funding to administer the program has been secured.

-- END --