



# MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA

Protecting consumers by advancing high quality, safe medical care.

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Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California | Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency | Department of Consumer Affairs

**Hyatt Place Emeryville San Francisco Bay Area**  
**5700 Bay Street**  
**Emeryville, CA, 94608**  
**Thursday, December 4, 2025- Friday, December 5, 2025**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, December 4, 2025**

***Due to timing for invited guests to provide their presentations, the agenda items below are listed in the order they were presented.***

**Members Present:**

Kristina D. Lawson, J.D., President  
Felix C. Yip, M.D., Vice President  
Veling W. Tsai, M.D., Secretary  
Jacob Arkatov, J.D.  
Irving Ayala-Rodriguez, M.D.  
Anni Chung  
Asif Mahmood, M.D.  
Jodi Remke, J.D.  
Trinidad Solis, M.D.  
Richard E. Thorp, M.D.  
Gerald Tolbert, M.D.  
Marina Torres, J.D.  
Eserick "TJ" Watkins

**Members Absent:**

None

**Staff Present:**

Aaron Bone, Chief of Legislation and Public Affairs  
Roderick Custodio, Associate Governmental Program Analyst  
Sean Eichelkraut, Information Technology Manager II  
Douglas Hock, Chief of Licensing  
Keoni Lucas, Business Services Office Manager  
Marina O'Connor, Deputy Director  
Sharlene Smith, Chief of Enforcement  
Angelaya Strother, Associate Governmental Program Analyst  
Reji Varghese, Executive Director  
Kerrie Webb, Legal Counsel

## **Agenda Item 1      Call to Order/Roll Call/Establishment of a Quorum**

Kristina D. Lawson called the meeting of the Medical Board of California (Board) to order on Thursday, December 4, 2025 at 10:05 a.m. A quorum was present and due notice was provided to all interested parties.

## **Agenda Item 2      Public Comments on Items not on the Agenda ([Link to Video](#))**

[Public comments on this agenda item were made by:](#) Susanna Zaraysky, Rob Gordon, and Marian Hollingsworth.

## **Agenda Item 3      Approval of Minutes from the August 21-22, 2025 Quarterly Board Meeting ([Link to Video](#))**

Mr. Watkins sought clarification on the recorded version of the meeting. Staff confirmed that the Board does not edit the body of the video recording of the meetings.

**Dr. Tsai moved to approve the minutes S:/ Dr. Yip, 12-0-1 (Mr. Watkins Abstained)**

[Public comments on this agenda item were made by:](#) Rob Gordon.

## **Agenda Item 4      President's Report, including notable accomplishments and priorities, introduction of Dr. Tolbert, and communications with interested parties ([Link to Video](#))**

Ms. Lawson extended her gratitude to all members of the medical profession who work during the holidays.

She recognized Board member, Anni Chung, for being honored as one of San Francisco's San Franciscans of the Year.

She introduced new Board member, Dr. Tolbert. Dr. Tolbert thanked the Board and expressed that it is a privilege to serve on the Board.

Regarding communication with interested parties, Ms. Lawson did not have anything specific to report, but she continues to meet with those who request meetings and to forward communications she receives to Board staff. Dr. Yip stated that he attended the FSMB Ethics and Professionalism meeting October 15, 2025. There is a trend for physicians to unionize, and they may have a right to strike. He will follow this trend.

Mr. Watkins stated that he spoke with patient advocates and NBC.

[Public comments on this agenda item were made by:](#) Michele Monserratt-Ramos and Rob Gordon.

## **Agenda Item 5      Executive Management Reports ([Link to Video](#))**

Mr. Eichelkraut provided the technology update including on, among other things, staffing, Infrastructure/ Software, complaint tracking system, IOS application, Consultant

Expert Management Application (CEMA), the Direct Online Certification Submission (DOCS), Volunteer Physician Registry, the Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) Survey, BreEZe online complaint form, electronic renewal process, and wallet card license generator.

Mr. Hock provided a Licensing Program update, including on, among other things, form updates, process improvements, electronic quality assurance review process, the Direct Online Certification Submission (DOCS), webmaster inquiries, and the Consumer Information Unit.

Ms. Smith provided the Enforcement Program summary and provided updates on, Central Complaint Unit, Complainant Liaison Unit, Expert Review program, Complaint investigation Office, the Disciplinary coordination unit, Probation Unit, and the collaboration efforts with HQUI and the Health Quality Enforcement Section at the Attorney General's Office (AGO).

Mr. Varghese provided the administrative summary, including updates on staffing and the vacancy rate. He reported that as of January 1, 2026, the Board will be eliminating five vacant positions that were designated for elimination as part of the 2024 budget act.

Mr. Varghese proceeded with the budget update and stated the Board was able to repay all outstanding loan obligations. This significantly improved the fund condition reducing the financial risk and increasing flexibility in the future. He discussed the four areas of financial discipline, which are monitoring and managing the impact of the fee increase, evaluating expenditures and resource utilization, prioritizing timely collection of reimbursements and cost recovery, using prudent budgeting and forecasting to avoid overcommitment to stay within the Board's budget and maintain reserves.

Mr. Varghese also provided an update on media relations and external communications.

Board members and staff discussed the Executive Management Reports.

[Public comments on this agenda item were made by:](#) Michele Monserratt-Ramos, Rob Gordon, Tracy Dominguez, and Maria Ibarra-Navarrette.

## **Agenda Item 6      Updates from External Stakeholders ([Link to Video](#))**

Lucia Saldivar, from Board and Bureau Relations for DCA, welcomed Dr. Tolbert to his first Board meeting and introduced herself to the Board.

Among other updates she commented on Shelly Jones' appointment to be the Assistant Deputy Director of Board and Bureau relations, Director Kimberly Kirchmeyer's retirement at the end of the year, required training for Board members, travel requirements, and annual charitable campaigns, Our Promise, and the State Employees Food Drive.

Stephanie Whitley provided the Health Quality Investigation Unit (HQIU) update. Among other information, Ms. Whitley discussed that HQIU has 11 investigator vacancies, which is a 14% vacancy rate. She stated that in October HQIU partnered with the Health Quality Enforcement Section to conduct mandatory training sessions on 805 reporting. In addition, in November, the division hosted a statewide supervisor meeting. She also discussed the new enforcement collaboration model between the Board, the AGO, and HQIU.

Board members and Ms. Whitley discussed the HQIU data.

[Public comments on this agenda item were made by:](#) Michele Monserratt-Ramos and Rob Gordon.

**Agenda Item 7      Discussion and Possible Action on Recommendations from the Special Faculty Permit Review Committee ([Link to Video](#))**

Dr. Ayala-Rodriguez discussed that on September 3, 2025, the Special Faculty Permit Review Committee (SFPRC) held a meeting to consider candidates for special faculty appointments. Dr. Ayala-Rodriguez presented on Dr. Pakdel for a Special Faculty Permit appointment at the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine and Dr. Amodeo for a Special Faculty Permit at Stanford University School of Medicine.

**Dr. Yip moved to approve the Special Faculty Permit appointments for Dr. Farzad Pakdel, and Dr. Antonio Amodeo, S:/ Dr. Tsai 13-0-0**

No public comments were made on this agenda item.

**Agenda Item 8      Discussion and Possible Action on Legislation and Implementation Plans ([Link to Video](#))**

Mr. Bone provided several updates on bills that the Board had already taken a position on, and discussed the implementation plans where applicable.

**AB 408 (Berman) Physician Health and Wellness Program**

This is the Board's sponsored bill. This bill creates a physician health and wellness program, or PHWP, consistent with national best practices. This program would prioritize early intervention in health conditions that impair, or could possibly impair, a current or future Board licensee from practicing in a reasonably safe, competent, and professional manner.

Board members and staff discussed the bill.

[Public comments on this agenda were made by:](#) K Funk, Lucas Evenson, Rob Gordon, Tracy Dominguez, Dr. David Granovetter, Rebecca Marcus, Maria Ibarra-Navarrette, Michele Monserratt-Ramos, and Marian Hollingsworth.

**AB 489 (Bonta) Health Care Professions: Deceptive Terms or Letters: Artificial Intelligence**

Prohibits artificial intelligence systems or similar technologies from misrepresenting “themselves” as licensed health professionals.

This bill will be included in the new law roundup, and the Board will work with DCA on enforcement codes to track complaints related to activity. Further, staff intend to publish an article to promote awareness.

**AB 876 (Flora) Nurse Anesthetists: Scope of Practice**

Codifies the scope of practice for Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs).

This bill will be included in the new law roundup, and staff intend to put this information in the upcoming newsletter to promote awareness.

**SB 160 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review) Background Checks**

The bill updates the Medical Practice Act (Act) to authorize the Medical Board of California (Board) and the Osteopathic Medical Board of California (OMBC) to enroll licensees in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) “Rap Back” Program, which will provide the Board and OMBC with subsequent federal arrest and conviction notifications, once that program is available.

This bill will be included in the new law roundup, and Board staff will collaborate with the DOJ to make any necessary implementation plans.

**SB 387 (Rubio) Physicians and Surgeons: Special Faculty Permits: Academic Medical Centers**

Updates the definition of “academic medical center” (AMC) to allow City of Hope Cancer Center, to be authorized to sponsor individuals for a special faculty permit (SFP) to practice medicine within that organization.

This bill will be included in the new law roundup, and Board staff are working with the City of Hope Cancer Center to advise them of the relevant processes. Updated information will be provided on the Board’s website.

**SB 470 (Laird) Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act: Teleconferencing**

Extends the sunset date for laws authorizing remote meetings for certain state bodies until January 2030.

The Board uses this option for its advisory committees.

This bill will be included in the new law roundup.

Dr. Mahmood and staff discussed SB 160 relating to the rap back program. There were no additional public comments on this agenda item.

**Kristina D. Lawson adjourned the meeting at 12:43 p.m.**

## **RECESS**

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**Friday, December 5, 2025**

**Due to timing for invited guests to provide their presentations, the agenda items below are listed in the order they were presented.**

### **Members Present:**

Kristina D. Lawson, J.D., President  
Felix C. Yip, M.D., Vice President  
Veling W. Tsai, M.D., Secretary  
Jacob Arkatov, J.D.  
Irving Ayala-Rodriguez, M.D.  
Anni Chung  
Asif Mahmood, M.D.  
Jodi Remke, J.D.  
Trinidad Solis, M.D.  
Richard E. Thorp, M.D.  
Gerald Tolbert, M.D.  
Marina Torres, J.D.  
Eserick "TJ" Watkins

### **Members Absent:**

None

### **Staff Present:**

Aaron Bone, Chief of Legislation and Public Affairs  
Roderick Custodio, Associate Governmental Program Analyst  
Sean Eichelkraut, Information Technology Manager II  
Douglas Hock, Chief of Licensing  
Keoni Lucas, Business Services Office Manager  
Marina O'Connor, Deputy Director  
Sharlene Smith, Chief of Enforcement  
Angelaya Strother, Associate Governmental Program Analyst  
Reji Varghese, Executive Director  
Kerrie Webb, Legal Counsel

### **Agenda Item 9      Call to Order/ Roll Call/ Establishment of Quorum**

Kristina D. Lawson called the meeting of the Medical Board of California (Board) to order on Friday, December 5, 2025 at 9:05 a.m. A quorum was present and due notice was provided to all interested parties.

#### **Agenda Item 10    Presentation on the Board’s Enforcement Process ([Link to Video](#))**

Sharlene Smith provided an overview of the enforcement process, emphasizing the Board’s highest priority of public protection. She discussed the various units under the Enforcement Program, including the Central Complaint Unit (CCU), Complainant Liaison Unit (CLU), Complaint Investigation Office (CIO)/ HQIU, Expert Reviewer Program, and the Probation Unit and discussed the functions of each unit/program.

Board members and staff discussed the presentation.

[Public comments on this agenda item were made by:](#) Michele Monserratt-Ramos, Marian Hollingsworth, Marcus Friedman, Rob Gordon, Maria Ibarra-Navarrette, and Dr. Susan Sykes.

#### **Agenda Item 11    Presentation on the Board’s Enforcement Data ([Link to Video](#))**

Reji Varghese discussed the enforcement data and highlighted the various ways that the data is presented across the Board’s quarterly reports, annual reports, and DCA’s annual reports. Reports are a snapshot in time. How a case is coded may change over time due to various factors, such as quality assurance reviews correcting a coding error and litigation impacting the outcome of the case.

Board members and staff discussed the reports and the manner in which they are presented.

[Public comments on this agenda item were made by:](#) Michele Monserratt-Ramos, Rob Gordon, Marian Hollingsworth, and Tracy Dominguez.

#### **Agenda Item 12    Discussion and Possible Action Related to the Midwifery Advisory Council (MAC), including a Report from the Last MAC Meeting, and Approval of Agenda Items for the Next MAC Meeting ([Link to Video](#))**

Madeleine Wisner provided an update on the previous MAC meeting that was held September 11, 2025. Ms. Wisner requested that the Board approve the 2026 MAC meeting dates and approval of the agenda items for the next meeting.

**Dr. Tsai moved to approve the requested action S:/ Dr. Mahmood 13-0-0**

[Public comments on this agenda item were made by:](#) Rob Gordon.

#### **Agenda Item 13    Future Agenda Items ([Link to Video](#))**

Dr. Mahmood requested a presentation on essential vaccinations.

Dr. Yip requested a presentation on long COVID, data on maternal mortality, and AI transcription for public commenters.

Dr. Thorp advised that on December 17, there will be a collaborative symposium between the Board, Board of Pharmacy, Board of Registered Nursing, Physician Assistant Board, AGO, and DCA relating to problems pertaining to opioid prescribing and lack of access to medication.

Mr. Watkins asked for an agenda item on providing notice to the public on doctors being investigated.

Dr. Ayla-Rodriguez requested a report on the maternal mortality data and a discussion about AI.

Ms. Remke requested a presentation from the Attorney General's Office and their role with the Board.

[Public comments on this agenda item were made by:](#) Monty Goddard, Marcus Friedman, Rob Gordon, and Michele Monserratt-Ramos.

**Agenda Item 14 Closed Session ([Link to Video](#))**

Pursuant to Government Code section 11126(a)(1), the Board will meet in closed session to conduct the annual performance evaluation of its Executive Director.

Return to Open Session

**Agenda Item 15 Adjournment**

Signature on File February 26, 2026

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Kristina D. Lawson, J.D., President Date

Signature on File February 26, 2026

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Veling Tsai M.D., Secretary Date

Signature on File February 26, 2026

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Reji Varghese, Executive Director Date