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Bonilla Proposes New Pathway for More Physicians

SACRAMENTO – Assemblywoman Susan A. Bonilla, in partnership with the University of California and the Medical Board of California, has introduced legislation to allow graduates of accelerated and fully accredited medical education programs to become licensed physicians in California. By creating this pathway, students will have the opportunity to incur less student debt while becoming dedicated, well-trained physicians.

“We have a growing shortage of trained medical residents and physicians to meet the demands of our communities,” said Assemblywoman Bonilla. “In addition, the accumulation of student debt is overwhelming to many students seeking to become physicians. By creating this new pathway, we can begin to reduce the growing shortage and provide the opportunity for students to graduate with less student debt.”

Medical schools in New York and Texas have developed accelerated programs that produce graduates in three years by focusing more on the medical students’ skills and academic achievement, rather than on the time spent in medical school itself. According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, there is no evidence that four years of medical school enhances clinical skills or the quality of patient care. In addition, for many students, the fourth year of medical school is focused almost entirely on electives and applying for residency. Furthermore, the *Washington Post* cites that students that have graduated from shortened medical programs perform just as highly on board examinations and placements in residency programs.

“The Medical Board of California is pleased to cosponsor AB 1838 with the University of California Office of the President. The Medical Board’s mission includes the promotion of access to quality medical care through the Medical Board’s licensing and regulatory functions,” said Medical Board of California’s Executive Director, Kimberly Kirchmeyer. “We believe that this legislation will meet the needs of the applicants who are enrolling in these programs and will still fulfill the Medical Board’s mission of consumer protection and access to care.”

The University of California operates six of California’s nine MD-granting medical schools and provides specialty training for nearly half of the state’s medical residents. “As a major provider of medical education in the state, the University of California believes this change in law is straightforward and will benefit the state by reducing unnecessary and out-dated barriers to practice in the state,” said Dr. Cathryn Nation, Associate Vice President, Health Sciences. “AB 1838 will benefit not only the future graduates of UC Davis’ new, accelerated MD degree program (which

plans to enroll its first class of four students in summer 2014), but, also all graduates of any accelerated program offered by an LCME-accredited medical school.”

Assemblywoman Bonilla’s legislation, AB 1838, will allow graduates of accelerated medical education programs accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education or the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools to have a path to licensure in California. The bill is cosponsored by the Medical Board of California and the University of California.

Assemblywoman Susan A. Bonilla (D-Concord) is Chair of the Assembly Business, Professions and Consumer Protection Committee. She was elected in November 2010 and represents California’s 14th Assembly District, which includes Contra Costa County and Solano County.

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