

HOUSE BILL NO. 668
INTRODUCED BY W. STAHL

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PROCEDURE FOR PROFESSIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING BOARDS TO REQUIRE THE SUBMISSION OF FINGERPRINTS BY LICENSE APPLICANTS PRIOR TO THE ISSUANCE OF A LICENSE; AMENDING SECTIONS 37-1-201 AND 37-1-307, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN APPLICABILITY DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 37-1-201, MCA, is amended to read:

"37-1-201. Purpose. It is the public policy of the legislature of the state of Montana to encourage and contribute to the rehabilitation of criminal offenders and to assist them in the assumption of the responsibilities of citizenship. The legislature finds that the public is best protected when such offenders are given the opportunity to secure employment or to engage in a meaningful occupation, while licensure must be conferred with prudence to protect the interests of the public. The legislature finds that the process of licensure will be strengthened by instituting an effective mechanism for obtaining accurate public information regarding a license applicant's criminal background."

Section 2. Section 37-1-307, MCA, is amended to read:

"37-1-307. Board authority. (1) A board may:

- (a) hold hearings as provided in this part;
- (b) issue subpoenas requiring the attendance of witnesses or the production of documents and administer oaths in connection with investigations and disciplinary proceedings under this part. Subpoenas must be relevant to the complaint and must be signed by a member of the board. Subpoenas may be enforced as provided in 2-4-104.
- (c) authorize depositions and other discovery procedures under the Montana Rules of Civil Procedure in connection with an investigation, hearing, or proceeding held under this part;
- (d) establish a screening panel to determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that a licensee has violated a particular statute, rule, or standard justifying disciplinary proceedings. A screening panel shall specify in writing the particular statute, rule, or standard that the panel believes may have been violated. The

screening panel shall also state in writing the reasonable grounds that support the panel's finding that a violation may have occurred. The assigned board members may not subsequently participate in a hearing of the case. The final decision on the case must be made by a majority of the board members who did not serve on the screening panel for the case.

(e) grant or deny a license and, upon a finding of unprofessional conduct by an applicant or license holder, impose a sanction provided by this chapter.

~~(2) Each board is designated as a criminal justice agency within the meaning of 44-5-103 for the purpose of obtaining confidential criminal justice information regarding the board's licensees and license applicants and regarding possible unlicensed practice.~~

(2) (a) As a prerequisite to the issuance of a license, a board shall require the applicant to submit fingerprints for the purpose of fingerprint checks by the Montana department of justice and the federal bureau of investigation.

(b) The applicant shall sign a release of information to the board and is responsible to the department of justice for the payment of all fees associated with the criminal background check.

(c) Upon completion of the criminal background check, the department of justice shall forward all criminal justice information, as defined in 44-5-103, concerning the applicant that involves the conviction of a criminal offense in any jurisdiction to the board as authorized in 44-5-303.

(d) At the conclusion of any background check required by this section, the board must receive the criminal background check report but may not receive the fingerprint card of the applicant. Upon receipt of the criminal background check report, the department of justice shall promptly destroy the fingerprint card of the applicant.

(e) If an applicant has a history of criminal convictions, then pursuant to 37-1-203, the applicant has the opportunity to demonstrate to the board that the applicant is sufficiently rehabilitated to warrant the public trust. If the board determines that the applicant is not sufficiently rehabilitated, the license may be denied.

[(3) Each board shall require a license applicant to provide the applicant's social security number as a part of the application. Each board shall keep the social security number from this source confidential, except that a board may provide the number to the department of public health and human services for use in administering Title IV-D of the Social Security Act.] (Bracketed language terminates on occurrence of contingency--sec. 1, Ch. 27, L. 1999.)"

NEW SECTION. Section 3. Applicability. [This act] applies to applications for licensure submitted on

or after [the effective date of this act].

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