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**For immediate release**

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## **Secretary of State Jim Condos Announces New Law to Fast Track Qualified Healthcare and Mental Health Professionals During COVID-19 State of Emergency**

*Montpelier, VT* – Today Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos announced the Governor’s signing of a bill, [H.742](#) signed into law as Act 91 on March 30<sup>th</sup>, creating [fast tracks](#) for out-of-state licensed healthcare and mental health professionals, retired healthcare and mental health professionals, and new graduates to join or return to the Vermont workforce in order to address the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

“We are working judiciously to ensure that thousands of skilled professionals in crucial fields can practice quickly and safely,” said Secretary Condos. “We are thankful to the Legislature and Governor for working with our Office of Professional Regulation to address our growing health worker needs in Vermont through responsible licensing.”

Specifically, the new temporary law allows healthcare and mental health professionals who hold licenses in other states to practice in Vermont without having to go through the usual requirements to obtain a Vermont license. The same applies to those who retired from practice in Vermont within the last three years and who wish to reenter the workforce.

Additionally, the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) is authorized to issue temporary licenses free of charge to new graduates who are unable to take board exams due to the COVID-19 crisis and to Vermonters who retired between 3 and 10 years ago.

As is the case with all professionals licensed under OPR, those working in Vermont are subject to the laws and regulations governing their fields.

“This new law gives our office the flexibility it needs to respond to the current health crisis in Vermont, while maintaining our mission of protecting the public,” said OPR Director Lauren Hibbert. “Most importantly, qualified professionals who wish to join or return to the workforce during this critical time can now do so more quickly.”

Act 91 also expands access to telehealth across state lines, in an effort to increase the accessibility and availability of a range of healthcare services for Vermonters.

In addition to the changes above, the law allows pharmacists to extend previously prescribed maintenance prescriptions if it is not possible to get a new prescription from the prescriber. Pharmacists are also authorized to provide a therapeutic substitution of a medication or insulin if the originally prescribed drugs or insulin are unavailable. In both instances, pharmacists must notify the original prescriber of the extension or substitution.

*To read more about OPR’s policy changes and response to COVID-19 please visit: <https://sos.vermont.gov/opr/about-opr/covid-19-response/>. Out-of-state or retired healthcare or mental health professionals, or recent graduates in these fields, who are interested in practicing in Vermont should contact OPR.*

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