WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE
Regular Session, 2002

ENROLLED

Committee Substitute for

SENATE BILL NO. 243

(By Senators Wooton, Bowman and Lowe)

PASSED February 27, 2002

In Effect ninety days from Passage
AN ACT to amend and reenact section fourteen, article three, chapter thirty of the code of West Virginia, one thousand nine hundred thirty-one, as amended; and to amend article three-c of said chapter by adding thereto a new section, designated section four, all relating to the professional discipline of physicians and podiatrists; requiring hospitals to report certain information to the board of medicine regarding disciplinary actions and related legal actions against physicians or podiatrists; requiring managed care organizations to report certain information to the board of medicine regarding physicians or podiatrists; defining "managed care organization"; including state board of risk and insurance management among entities which must report on certain legal actions to the board of medicine;
requiring clerks of courts to forward certain court orders to the board of medicine; updating terminology and making certain technical revisions; authorizing board of medicine to revoke licenses for period not to exceed ten years; prohibiting physicians or podiatrists from practicing medicine, surgery or podiatry or to otherwise deliver health care services when license is temporarily suspended; eliminating ability of physician or podiatrist whose license is revoked because of a felony drug conviction from reapplying for licensure after five years; and authorizing defendants who prevail in civil actions filed as a result of peer review to recover attorney fees and court costs in certain circumstances.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

That section fourteen, article three, chapter thirty of the code of West Virginia, one thousand nine hundred thirty-one, as amended, be amended and reenacted; and that article three-c of said chapter be amended by adding thereto a new section, designated section four, all to read as follows:

ARTICLE 3. WEST VIRGINIA MEDICAL PRACTICE ACT.

§30-3-14. Professional discipline of physicians and podiatrists; reporting of information to board pertaining to medical professional liability and professional incompetence required; penalties; grounds for license denial and discipline of physicians and podiatrists; investigations; physical and mental examinations; hearings; sanctions; summary sanctions; reporting by the board; reapplication; civil and criminal immunity; voluntary limitation of license; probable cause determinations.

1 (a) The board may independently initiate disciplinary proceedings as well as initiate disciplinary proceedings based on information received from medical peer review committees, physicians, podiatrists, hospital administrators, professional societies and others.
The board may initiate investigations as to professional incompetence or other reasons for which a licensed physician or podiatrist may be adjudged unqualified based upon criminal convictions; complaints by citizens, pharmacists, physicians, podiatrists, peer review committees, hospital administrators, professional societies or others; or if there are five judgments or settlements within the most recent five-year period in excess of fifty thousand dollars each. The board may not consider any judgments or settlements as conclusive evidence of professional incompetence or conclusive lack of qualification to practice.

(b) Upon request of the board, any medical peer review committee in this state shall report any information that may relate to the practice or performance of any physician or podiatrist known to that medical peer review committee. Copies of the requests for information from a medical peer review committee may be provided to the subject physician or podiatrist if, in the discretion of the board, the provision of such copies will not jeopardize the board's investigation. In the event that copies are so provided, the subject physician or podiatrist is allowed fifteen days to comment on the requested information and such comments must be considered by the board.

The chief executive officer of every hospital shall, within sixty days after the completion of the hospital's formal disciplinary procedure and also after the commencement of and again after the conclusion of any resulting legal action, report in writing to the board the name of any member of the medical staff or any other physician or podiatrist practicing in the hospital whose hospital privileges have been revoked, restricted, reduced or terminated for any cause, including resignation, together with all pertinent information relating to such action. The chief executive officer shall also report any other formal disciplinary action taken against any physician or podiatrist by the hospital upon the recommendation of its medical staff relating to professional ethics, medical
incompetence, medical professional liability, moral
turpitude or drug or alcohol abuse. Temporary suspension
for failure to maintain records on a timely basis or failure
to attend staff or section meetings need not be reported.
Voluntary cessation of hospital privileges for reasons
unrelated to professional competence or ethics need not be
reported.

Any managed care organization operating in this state
which provides a formal peer review process shall report
in writing to the board, within sixty days after the comple-
tion of any formal peer review process and also within
sixty days after the commencement of and again after the
conclusion of any resulting legal action, the name of any
physician or podiatrist whose credentialing has been
revoked or not renewed by the managed care organization.
The managed care organization shall also report in writing
to the board any other disciplinary action taken against a
physician or podiatrist relating to professional ethics,
professional liability, moral turpitude or drug or alcohol
abuse within sixty days after completion of a formal peer
review process which results in the action taken by the
managed care organization. For purposes of this subsec-
tion, “managed care organization” means a plan that
establishes, operates or maintains a network of health care
providers who have entered into agreements with and been
credentialied by the plan to provide health care services to
enrollees or insureds to whom the plan has the ultimate
obligation to arrange for the provision of or payment for
health care services through organizational arrangements
for ongoing quality assurance, utilization review programs
or dispute resolutions.

Any professional society in this state comprised primar-
ily of physicians or podiatrists which takes formal disci-
plinary action against a member relating to professional
ethics, professional incompetence, medical professional
liability, moral turpitude or drug or alcohol abuse, shall
report in writing to the board within sixty days of a final
decision the name of the member, together with all pertinent information relating to the action.

Every person, partnership, corporation, association, insurance company, professional society or other organization providing professional liability insurance to a physician or podiatrist in this state, including the state board of risk and insurance management, shall submit to the board the following information within thirty days from any judgment or settlement of a civil or medical professional liability action excepting product liability actions: The date of any judgment or settlement; whether any appeal has been taken on the judgment and, if so, by which party; the amount of any settlement or judgment against the insured; and other information as the board may require.

Within thirty days from the entry of an order by a court in a medical professional liability action or other civil action wherein a physician or podiatrist licensed by the board is determined to have rendered health care services below the applicable standard of care, the clerk of the court in which the order was entered shall forward a certified copy of the order to the board.

Within thirty days after a person known to be a physician or podiatrist licensed or otherwise lawfully practicing medicine and surgery or podiatry in this state or applying to be so licensed is convicted of a felony under the laws of this state or of any crime under the laws of this state involving alcohol or drugs in any way, including any controlled substance under state or federal law, the clerk of the court of record in which the conviction was entered shall forward to the board a certified true and correct abstract of record of the convicting court. The abstract shall include the name and address of the physician or podiatrist or applicant, the nature of the offense committed and the final judgment and sentence of the court.

Upon a determination of the board that there is probable cause to believe that any person, partnership, corporation,
association, insurance company, professional society or
other organization has failed or refused to make a report
required by this subsection, the board shall provide
written notice to the alleged violator stating the nature of
the alleged violation and the time and place at which the
alleged violator shall appear to show good cause why a
civil penalty should not be imposed. The hearing shall be
conducted in accordance with the provisions of article five,
chapter twenty-nine-a of this code. After reviewing the
record of the hearing, if the board determines that a
violation of this subsection has occurred, the board shall
assess a civil penalty of not less than one thousand dollars
nor more than ten thousand dollars against the violator.
Anyone so assessed shall be notified of the assessment in
writing and the notice shall specify the reasons for the
assessment. If the violator fails to pay the amount of the
assessment to the board within thirty days, the attorney
general may institute a civil action in the circuit court of
Kanawha County to recover the amount of the assessment.
In any such civil action, the court's review of the board's
action shall be conducted in accordance with the provi­sions of section four, article five, chapter twenty-nine-a of
this code. Notwithstanding any other provision of this
article to the contrary, when there are conflicting views by
recognized experts as to whether any alleged conduct
breaches an applicable standard of care, the evidence must
be clear and convincing before the board may find that the
physician has demonstrated a lack of professional compe­tence to practice with a reasonable degree of skill and
safety for patients.

Any person may report to the board relevant facts about
the conduct of any physician or podiatrist in this state
which in the opinion of that person amounts to medical
professional liability or professional incompetence.

The board shall provide forms for filing reports pursuant
to this section. Reports submitted in other forms shall be
accepted by the board.
The filing of a report with the board pursuant to any provision of this article, any investigation by the board or any disposition of a case by the board does not preclude any action by a hospital, other health care facility or professional society comprised primarily of physicians or podiatrists to suspend, restrict or revoke the privileges or membership of the physician or podiatrist.

(c) The board may deny an application for license or other authorization to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry in this state and may discipline a physician or podiatrist licensed or otherwise lawfully practicing in this state who, after a hearing, has been adjudged by the board as unqualified due to any of the following reasons:

(1) Attempting to obtain, obtaining, renewing or attempting to renew a license to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry by bribery, fraudulent misrepresentation or through known error of the board;

(2) Being found guilty of a crime in any jurisdiction, which offense is a felony, involves moral turpitude or directly relates to the practice of medicine. Any plea of nolo contendere is a conviction for the purposes of this subdivision;

(3) False or deceptive advertising;

(4) Aiding, assisting, procuring or advising any unauthorized person to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry contrary to law;

(5) Making or filing a report that the person knows to be false; intentionally or negligently failing to file a report or record required by state or federal law; willfully impeding or obstructing the filing of a report or record required by state or federal law; or inducing another person to do any of the foregoing. The reports and records as are herein covered mean only those that are signed in the capacity as a licensed physician or podiatrist;
(6) Requesting, receiving or paying directly or indirectly a payment, rebate, refund, commission, credit or other form of profit or valuable consideration for the referral of patients to any person or entity in connection with providing medical or other health care services or clinical laboratory services, supplies of any kind, drugs, medication or any other medical goods, services or devices used in connection with medical or other health care services;

(7) Unprofessional conduct by any physician or podiatrist in referring a patient to any clinical laboratory or pharmacy in which the physician or podiatrist has a proprietary interest unless the physician or podiatrist discloses in writing such interest to the patient. The written disclosure shall indicate that the patient may choose any clinical laboratory for purposes of having any laboratory work or assignment performed or any pharmacy for purposes of purchasing any prescribed drug or any other medical goods or devices used in connection with medical or other health care services;

As used herein, "proprietary interest" does not include an ownership interest in a building in which space is leased to a clinical laboratory or pharmacy at the prevailing rate under a lease arrangement that is not conditional upon the income or gross receipts of the clinical laboratory or pharmacy;

(8) Exercising influence within a patient-physician relationship for the purpose of engaging a patient in sexual activity;

(9) Making a deceptive, untrue or fraudulent representation in the practice of medicine and surgery or podiatry;

(10) Soliciting patients, either personally or by an agent, through the use of fraud, intimidation or undue influence;

(11) Failing to keep written records justifying the course of treatment of a patient, the records to include, but not be
limited to, patient histories, examination and test results and treatment rendered, if any;

(12) Exercising influence on a patient in such a way as to exploit the patient for financial gain of the physician or podiatrist or of a third party. Any influence includes, but is not limited to, the promotion or sale of services, goods, appliances or drugs;

(13) Prescribing, dispensing, administering, mixing or otherwise preparing a prescription drug, including any controlled substance under state or federal law, other than in good faith and in a therapeutic manner in accordance with accepted medical standards and in the course of the physician’s or podiatrist’s professional practice: Provided, That a physician who discharges his or her professional obligation to relieve the pain and suffering and promote the dignity and autonomy of dying patients in his or her care and, in so doing, exceeds the average dosage of a pain relieving controlled substance, in Schedule II and III of the Uniform Control Substance Act, does not violate this article;

(14) Performing any procedure or prescribing any therapy that, by the accepted standards of medical practice in the community, would constitute experimentation on human subjects without first obtaining full, informed and written consent;

(15) Practicing or offering to practice beyond the scope permitted by law or accepting and performing professional responsibilities that the person knows or has reason to know he or she is not competent to perform;

(16) Delegating professional responsibilities to a person when the physician or podiatrist delegating the responsibilities knows or has reason to know that the person is not qualified by training, experience or licensure to perform them;
(17) Violating any provision of this article or a rule or order of the board or failing to comply with a subpoena or subpoena duces tecum issued by the board;

(18) Conspiring with any other person to commit an act or committing an act that would tend to coerce, intimidate or preclude another physician or podiatrist from lawfully advertising his or her services;

(19) Gross negligence in the use and control of prescription forms;

(20) Professional incompetence; or

(21) The inability to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry with reasonable skill and safety due to physical or mental impairment, including deterioration through the aging process or loss of motor skill or abuse of drugs or alcohol. A physician or podiatrist adversely affected under this subdivision shall be afforded an opportunity at reasonable intervals to demonstrate that he or she may resume the competent practice of medicine and surgery or podiatry with reasonable skill and safety to patients. In any proceeding under this subdivision, neither the record of proceedings nor any orders entered by the board shall be used against the physician or podiatrist in any other proceeding.

(d) The board shall deny any application for a license or other authorization to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry in this state to any applicant who, and shall revoke the license of any physician or podiatrist licensed or otherwise lawfully practicing within this state who, is found guilty by any court of competent jurisdiction of any felony involving prescribing, selling, administering, dispensing, mixing or otherwise preparing any prescription drug, including any controlled substance under state or federal law, for other than generally accepted therapeutic purposes. Presentation to the board of a certified copy of the guilty verdict or plea rendered in the court is
sufficient proof thereof for the purposes of this article. A plea of nolo contendere has the same effect as a verdict or plea of guilt.

(e) The board may refer any cases coming to its attention to an appropriate committee of an appropriate professional organization for investigation and report. Except for complaints related to obtaining initial licensure to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry in this state by bribery or fraudulent misrepresentation, any complaint filed more than two years after the complainant knew, or in the exercise of reasonable diligence should have known, of the existence of grounds for the complaint, shall be dismissed: Provided, That in cases of conduct alleged to be part of a pattern of similar misconduct or professional incapacity that, if continued, would pose risks of a serious or substantial nature to the physician or podiatrist's current patients, the investigating body may conduct a limited investigation related to the physician or podiatrist's current capacity and qualification to practice and may recommend conditions, restrictions or limitations on the physician or podiatrist's license to practice that it considers necessary for the protection of the public. Any report shall contain recommendations for any necessary disciplinary measures and shall be filed with the board within ninety days of any referral. The recommendations shall be considered by the board and the case may be further investigated by the board. The board after full investigation shall take whatever action it deems appropriate, as provided herein.

(f) The investigating body, as provided for in subsection (e) of this section, may request and the board under any circumstances may require a physician or podiatrist or person applying for licensure or other authorization to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry in this state to submit to a physical or mental examination by a physician or physicians approved by the board. A physician or podiatrist submitting to any such examination has the
right, at his or her expense, to designate another physician
to be present at the examination and make an independent
report to the investigating body or the board. The expense
of the examination shall be paid by the board. Any
individual who applies for or accepts the privilege of
practicing medicine and surgery or podiatry in this state
is considered to have given his or her consent to submit to
all examinations when requested to do so in writing by the
board and to have waived all objections to the admissibil-
ity of the testimony or examination report of any examin-
ing physician on the ground that the testimony or report is
privileged communication. If a person fails or refuses to
submit to any such examination under circumstances
which the board finds are not beyond his or her control,
failure or refusal is prima facie evidence of his or her
inability to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry
competently and in compliance with the standards of
acceptable and prevailing medical practice.

(g) In addition to any other investigators it employs, the
board may appoint one or more licensed physicians to act
for it in investigating the conduct or competence of a
physician.

(h) In every disciplinary or licensure denial action, the
board shall furnish the physician or podiatrist or applicant
with written notice setting out with particularity the
reasons for its action. Disciplinary and licensure denial
hearings shall be conducted in accordance with the
provisions of article five, chapter twenty-nine-a of this
code. However, hearings shall be heard upon sworn
testimony and the rules of evidence for trial courts of
record in this state shall apply to all hearings. A tran-
script of all hearings under this section shall be made and
the respondent may obtain a copy of the transcript at his
or her expense. The physician or podiatrist has the right
to defend against any charge by the introduction of
evidence, the right to be represented by counsel, the right
to present and cross-examine witnesses and the right to
have subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum issued on his or her behalf for the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents. The board shall make all its final actions public. The order shall contain the terms of all action taken by the board.

(i) In disciplinary actions in which probable cause has been found by the board, the board shall, within twenty days of the date of service of the written notice of charges or sixty days prior to the date of the scheduled hearing, whichever is sooner, provide the respondent with the complete identity, address and telephone number of any person known to the board with knowledge about the facts of any of the charges; provide a copy of any statements in the possession of or under the control of the board; provide a list of proposed witnesses with addresses and telephone numbers, with a brief summary of his or her anticipated testimony; provide disclosure of any trial expert pursuant to the requirements of rule 26(b)(4) of the West Virginia rules of civil procedure; provide inspection and copying of the results of any reports of physical and mental examinations or scientific tests or experiments; and provide a list and copy of any proposed exhibit to be used at the hearing: Provided, That the board shall not be required to furnish or produce any materials which contain opinion work product information or would be a violation of the attorney-client privilege. Within twenty days of the date of service of the written notice of charges, the board shall be required to disclose any exculpatory evidence with a continuing duty to do so throughout the disciplinary process. Within thirty days of receipt of the board's mandatory discovery, the respondent shall provide the board with the complete identity, address and telephone number of any person known to the respondent with knowledge about the facts of any of the charges; provide a list of proposed witnesses with addresses and telephone numbers, to be called at hearing, with a brief summary of his or her anticipated testimony; provide disclosure of any trial expert pursuant to the requirements of rule 26(b)(4)
of the West Virginia rules of civil procedure; provide
inspection and copying of the results of any reports of
physical and mental examinations or scientific tests or
experiments; and provide a list and copy of any proposed
exhibit to be used at the hearing.

Whenever it finds any person unqualified because of
any of the grounds set forth in subsection (c) of this
section, the board may enter an order imposing one or
more of the following:

(1) Deny his or her application for a license or other
authorization to practice medicine and surgery or podia-
try;

(2) Administer a public reprimand;

(3) Suspend, limit or restrict his or her license or other
authorization to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry
for not more than five years, including limiting the
practice of that person to, or by the exclusion of, one or
more areas of practice, including limitations on practice
privileges;

(4) Revoke his or her license or other authorization to
practice medicine and surgery or podiatry or to prescribe
or dispense controlled substances for a period not to
exceed ten years;

(5) Require him or her to submit to care, counseling or
treatment designated by the board as a condition for
initial or continued licensure or renewal of licensure or
other authorization to practice medicine and surgery or
podiatry;

(6) Require him or her to participate in a program of
education prescribed by the board;

(7) Require him or her to practice under the direction of
a physician or podiatrician designated by the board for a
specified period of time; and
(8) Assess a civil fine of not less than one thousand dollars nor more than ten thousand dollars.

(k) Notwithstanding the provisions of section eight, article one, chapter thirty of this code, if the board determines the evidence in its possession indicates that a physician's or podiatrist's continuation in practice or unrestricted practice constitutes an immediate danger to the public, the board may take any of the actions provided for in subsection (j) of this section on a temporary basis and without a hearing if institution of proceedings for a hearing before the board are initiated simultaneously with the temporary action and begin within fifteen days of the action. The board shall render its decision within five days of the conclusion of a hearing under this subsection.

(l) Any person against whom disciplinary action is taken pursuant to the provisions of this article has the right to judicial review as provided in articles five and six, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code: Provided, That a circuit judge may also remand the matter to the board if it appears from competent evidence presented to it in support of a motion for remand that there is newly discovered evidence of such a character as ought to produce an opposite result at a second hearing on the merits before the board and:

1. The evidence appears to have been discovered since the board hearing; and

2. The physician or podiatrist exercised due diligence in asserting his or her evidence and that due diligence would not have secured the newly discovered evidence prior to the appeal. A person may not practice medicine and surgery or podiatry or deliver health care services in violation of any disciplinary order revoking, suspending or limiting his or her license while any appeal is pending. Within sixty days, the board shall report its final action regarding restriction, limitation, suspension or revocation of the license of a physician or podiatrist, limitation on practice privileges or other disciplinary action against any
physician or podiatrist to all appropriate state agencies, appropriate licensed health facilities and hospitals, insurance companies or associations writing medical malpractice insurance in this state, the American medical association, the American podiatry association, professional societies of physicians or podiatrists in the state and any entity responsible for the fiscal administration of medicare and medicaid.

(m) Any person against whom disciplinary action has been taken under the provisions of this article shall, at reasonable intervals, be afforded an opportunity to demonstrate that he or she can resume the practice of medicine and surgery or podiatry on a general or limited basis. At the conclusion of a suspension, limitation or restriction period the physician or podiatrist may resume practice if the board has so ordered.

(n) Any entity, organization or person, including the board, any member of the board, its agents or employees and any entity or organization or its members referred to in this article, any insurer, its agents or employees, a medical peer review committee and a hospital governing board, its members or any committee appointed by it acting without malice and without gross negligence in making any report or other information available to the board or a medical peer review committee pursuant to law and any person acting without malice and without gross negligence who assists in the organization, investigation or preparation of any such report or information or assists the board or a hospital governing body or any committee in carrying out any of its duties or functions provided by law is immune from civil or criminal liability, except that the unlawful disclosure of confidential information possessed by the board is a misdemeanor as provided for in this article.

(o) A physician or podiatrist may request in writing to the board a limitation on or the surrendering of his or her license to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry or
other appropriate sanction as provided herein. The board may grant the request and, if it considers it appropriate, may waive the commencement or continuation of other proceedings under this section. A physician or podiatrist whose license is limited or surrendered or against whom other action is taken under this subsection may, at reasonable intervals, petition for removal of any restriction or limitation on or for reinstatement of his or her license to practice medicine and surgery or podiatry.

(p) In every case considered by the board under this article regarding discipline or licensure, whether initiated by the board or upon complaint or information from any person or organization, the board shall make a preliminary determination as to whether probable cause exists to substantiate charges of disqualification due to any reason set forth in subsection (c) of this section. If probable cause is found to exist, all proceedings on the charges shall be open to the public who shall be entitled to all reports, records and nondeliberative materials introduced at the hearing, including the record of the final action taken:

Provided, That any medical records, which were introduced at the hearing and which pertain to a person who has not expressly waived his or her right to the confidentiality of the records, may not be open to the public nor is the public entitled to the records.

(q) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this article, the board may, at any time, on its own motion, or upon motion by the complainant, or upon motion by the physician or podiatrist, or by stipulation of the parties, refer the matter to mediation. The board shall obtain a list from the West Virginia state bar's mediator referral service of certified mediators with expertise in professional disciplinary matters. The board and the physician or podiatrist may choose a mediator from this list. If the board and the physician or podiatrist are unable to agree on a mediator, the board shall designate a mediator from this listing by neutral rotation. The mediation shall not be considered a
proceeding open to the public and any reports and records introduced at the mediation shall not become part of the public record. The mediator and all participants in the mediation shall maintain and preserve the confidentiality of all mediation proceedings and records. The mediator may not be subpoenaed or called to testify or otherwise be subject to process requiring disclosure of confidential information in any proceeding relating to or arising out of the disciplinary or licensure matter mediated: Provided, That any confidentiality agreement and any written agreement made and signed by the parties as a result of mediation may be used in any proceedings subsequently instituted to enforce the written agreement. The agreements may be used in other proceedings if the parties agree in writing.

ARTICLE 3C. HEALTH CARE PEER REVIEW ORGANIZATION PROTECTION.

§30-3C-4. Liability for court costs and attorney fees in certain civil actions.

Any party or parties who institute an action as a result of a peer review may be liable for court costs and reasonable attorney's fees, if the defendant substantially prevails and if the action, or the plaintiff's conduct during the litigation of the action, was frivolous, unreasonable, without foundation, or in bad faith.
The Joint Committee on Enrolled Bills hereby certifies that the foregoing bill is correctly enrolled.

Chairman Senate Committee

Chairman House Committee

Originated in the Senate.

In effect ninety days from passage.

Clerk of the Senate

Clerk of the House of Delegates

President of the Senate

Speaker House of Delegates

The within is approved this the 12th Day of March 2002.

Governor