

## Does Variation in State Nursing Education Regulations Matter?

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### OBJECTIVE

This study aimed to identify policies states can adopt to improve nursing licensure pass rates by examining the relationships among state policies and nursing program-level characteristics to educational quality outcomes.

### DATA/SETTING

Our outcome data was 2018 and 2019 first time pass rates (FTPR) obtained from each state's Board of Nursing (BON). Independent variables included measures of board independence and board autonomy derived from a 2018 National Council of State Boards of Nursing survey of boards, and data on state business friendliness from CNBC. Control variables were from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and the U.S. Census Bureau.

### DESIGN/METHODS

We conducted Ordinary Least Squares regression analyses at the state and the program levels and tested for interactions of variables between the two levels.

### RESULTS

We found the policy of establishing minimum pass rates to allow schools to operate, a policy we classified as relating to BONs' authority, was significantly associated with FTPRs. At the program level, we found that being accredited was significantly associated with higher pass rates, in particular among the for-profit nursing programs. We also found a significant negative association between states with higher business-friendly scores and the performance of for-profit nursing programs.

### CONCLUSIONS

Our findings suggest that minimum required pass rates and mandatory accreditation, if accompanied by enforcement of the requirements may be key policy levers for improving nursing education performance. These are standards most other health professions have adopted at a national level, and nursing organizations may wish to consider. In the meantime, these two policies are particularly important for those states that are committed to enhancing their business friendliness, since pro-business policies were associated with an increase in low performing for-profit nursing programs.

**Key Words:** Health Profession Education; Nursing; State Policy