Sponsored by:
Senator JOSEPH F. VITALE
District 19 (Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS
Requires newly licensed registered professional nurse to attain baccalaureate degree in nursing within 10 years of initial licensure.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
AN ACT concerning educational requirements for registered professional nurses and amending P.L. 1947, c. 262.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. Section 4 of P.L. 1947, c. 262 (C. 45:11-26) is amended to read as follows:

4. a. Qualifications of applicants. An applicant for a license to practice professional nursing shall submit to the board evidence in such form as the board may prescribe that said applicant: (1) has attained his or her eighteenth birthday; (2) is of good moral character, is not a habitual user of drugs and has never been convicted or has not pleaded nolo contendere, non vult contendere or non vult to an indictment, information or complaint alleging a violation of any Federal or State law relating to narcotic drugs; (3) holds a diploma from an accredited 4-year high school or the equivalent thereof as determined by the New Jersey State Department of Education; (4) has completed a course of professional nursing study in an accredited school of professional nursing as defined by the board and holds a diploma therefrom.

Notwithstanding anything herein contained, any person who possesses the educational and school of professional nursing qualifications for registration required by the law of this State at the time of his or her graduation from an accredited school of professional nursing shall be deemed to possess the qualifications (3) and (4) prescribed hereinabove in this subsection.

Notwithstanding anything herein contained, any person who shall have qualifications (1) and (2) and shall have graduated from a school of professional nursing, which need not be an accredited school, shall be deemed to have qualifications (3) and (4) upon complying with such reasonable requirements as to high school and school of nursing studies and training as the board may prescribe; provided, however, that such person shall make application in form prescribed by the board within 1 year from the effective date of this act and shall satisfactorily complete such reasonable requirements and successfully pass the examinations, which examinations shall be limited to subject matters in the curriculum required by the board at the time of the applicant's graduation, provided for in subsection b. hereof, within 2 years after the date of the filing of such application.

b. License.

(1) By examination. The applicant shall be required to pass a written examination in such subjects as the board may determine, which examination may be supplemented by an oral or practical

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.
examination or both. Upon successfully passing such examinations the applicant shall be licensed by the board to practice professional nursing.

(2) By endorsement without examination. The board may issue a license to practice professional nursing without examination to an applicant who has been duly licensed or registered as a registered or professional nurse by examination or by original waiver under the laws of another State, territory or possession of the United States, or the District of Columbia, or any foreign country, if in the opinion of the board the applicant has the qualifications required by this act for the licensing of professional nurses, or equivalent qualifications.

c. Fees. An applicant for a license by examination shall pay to the board at the time of application a fee of $25.00 and at the time of each application for re-examination a fee of $20.00. An applicant for a license without examination shall pay to the board at the time of application a fee of $15.00 shall pay such fees as shall be established by regulation by the board or the Division of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Law and Public Safety.

d. Nurses registered under a previous law. Any person who on the effective date of this act holds a subsisting certificate of registration as a registered nurse issued pursuant to the provisions of the act repealed by section 22 of this act shall be deemed to be licensed as a professional nurse under this act during the calendar year in which this act shall take effect, and such person and any person who heretofore held a certificate of registration under said act hereby repealed as aforesaid shall be entitled to a renewal of such license as in the case of professional nurses licensed originally under this act.

e. Title and abbreviations used by licensee. Any person who holds a license to practice professional nursing under this act shall during the effective period of such license be entitled to use the title "Registered Nurse" and the abbreviation "R.N." The effective period of a license or a renewal thereof shall commence on the date of issuance and shall terminate at the end of the calendar year in which it is issued, and shall not include any period of suspension ordered by the board as hereinafter provided.] f. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section to the contrary, a person who is initially issued a license to practice professional nursing, beginning on or after the effective date of P.L.  , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill), shall be required to attain a baccalaureate degree in nursing within 10 years of initial licensure, in accordance with regulations adopted by the board, as a condition of renewal of the license. If a licensee is not able to attain the degree within 10 years of initial licensure, upon application of the licensee in a form and manner determined by the board, the board may grant a one-time conditional renewal of the
license, if the licensee agrees to meet the baccalaureate degree requirement of this subsection within a period of no more than two years.

(cf: P.L.1966, c.186, s.2)

2. This act shall take effect on the 90th day after enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill would require registered professional nurses (RNs) who are initially licensed by the New Jersey Board of Nursing, on or after the effective date of the bill, to attain a baccalaureate degree in nursing within 10 years of their initial licensure. The bill authorizes a licensee who is not able to attain the degree within a 10-year period to request a one-time (up to two-year) extension of the requirement in order to complete the degree.

The purpose of this bill to encourage newly-licensed RNs to advance their education in order to deliver the best quality care to their patients in an increasingly complex health care environment. Studies comparing patient outcomes with the educational background of nurses demonstrate that in hospitals with higher proportions of nurses educated at the baccalaureate level or higher, surgical patients experienced lower mortality and failure-to-rescue rates.

Under the provisions of this bill, RNs will continue to be able to enter the nursing profession through associate degree and diploma nursing programs. These new nurses will then have 10 years to advance their professional education and complete a baccalaureate degree in nursing. The requirements of the bill will not affect nurses who received their nursing license prior to the effective date of the bill, although it is the sponsor’s intent that currently licensed nurses also seek to advance their education and training.

The bill also deletes obsolete language concerning licensure fees and duration of licenses, which is now provided for in Chapter 1 of Title 45 of the Revised Statutes.