

STATE OF MONTANA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 1-2026

EXECUTIVE ORDER CREATING THE LICENSING REFORM ADVISORY COUNCIL

WHEREAS, regulatory reform has been a priority of this administration, as evidenced through my first Executive Order 1-2021, dated January 5, 2021, creating the Red Tape Relief Advisory Council to review and reform state regulations;

WHEREAS, the Advisory Council's work, including the reform, rollback, or repeal of more than 3,500 unnecessary, burdensome regulations and the enactment into law of 279 red tape bills, has resulted in reduced compliance costs, streamlined permitting and licensing processes, job growth, expanded business and provider opportunities, and increased private sector investments;

WHEREAS, the Montana State Legislature passed and I signed into law 26 separate licensing reform bills in 2025 to standardize licensing applications and processes across 200 license types issued to nearly 200,000 Montanans, representing the most comprehensive licensing reform the State has seen in a generation;

WHEREAS, in August 2025, I signed Executive Order 5-2025 to launch the 406 JOBS Initiative to work across the public and private sectors to promote career, college, military, and entrepreneurship pathways for Montanans;

WHEREAS, the Mercatus Center at George Mason University recognized the State of Montana for its embrace of regulatory freedom, ranking it the fourth best state for regulatory freedom in the nation;

WHEREAS, professional and occupational licenses issued in the State of Montana have doubled in the last decade and the number of occupations subject to professional licensure have increased;

WHEREAS, professional licensure is intended to protect the public's health, welfare, and safety, but as licensure has expanded, there has been no comprehensive review of existing regulations to determine if they are narrowly tailored to achieve that objective while avoiding unnecessary barriers to the provision of professional services;

WHEREAS, while licensure is generally designed to protect consumers, existing licensed professionals may design licensure to keep otherwise qualified professionals from working in their field, which effectively reduces competition in the marketplace, artificially reduces access to services, and unnecessarily drives up consumer costs;

WHEREAS, Montana citizens need accessible and affordable services, but face a shortage of providers in several occupational fields, including construction and health care professions, especially in rural communities;

WHEREAS, Montana has been awarded a historic \$233 million first-year investment through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Rural Health Transformation Program, one of the largest awards in the nation, to stabilize and modernize rural healthcare delivery, strengthen the rural workforce, and expand access to high-quality care in rural communities;

WHEREAS, Montana is committed to ensuring healthcare occupational licensing requirements are evidenced-based, tailored to protect public health and safety, and aligned with workforce needs so Montanans can access more timely and affordable healthcare services, especially in rural communities;

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of Montana citizens that the state ensures the safe delivery of professional services while also ensuring that practitioners and businesses are not unduly restricted by licensing requirements or practices that no longer serve their original purpose, increase costs to licensees and consumers, and drive down supply;

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the State to undertake a comprehensive, evidence-based study to ensure that existing regulatory structures and oversight of regulated professions are necessary, effective, and narrowly tailored to protect the public.

NOW THEREFORE, I, GREG GIANFORTE, Governor of the State of Montana, pursuant to the authority vested in me under the Constitution, Mont. Code Ann. § 2-15-122, and any other applicable statutes, do hereby authorize the creation of the Licensing Reform Advisory Council, also known as the Expanding Opportunities Task Force ("Task Force"), and order as follows:

PURPOSE

The Task Force shall provide the Governor with recommendations and strategies for the State of Montana to reform the professional occupational licensing system for the purposes of:

- identifying and removing burdens and barriers faced by licensees that are not necessary to protect the public; and
- improving access to and availability of professional services for citizens across Montana, including rural communities.

In developing recommendations and strategies, the Task Force shall seek input from Montana citizens, legislators, Montana associations whose members are licensed occupational professionals, professional licensing boards, relevant state agencies, advisory groups and researchers focused on occupational licensing, and other appropriate stakeholders as determined by the Task Force.

COMPOSITION

The Task Force shall consist of up to 27 members who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry shall serve as the presiding officer of the Task Force.

Task Force members shall include, but not be limited to, persons from the following categories:

- members or staff of professional associations representing consumers, professions, occupations, business, and industry;
- directors of state agencies that issue occupational licenses or their designees;
- state legislators and local elected officials; and
- subject matter experts, researchers, and policy analysts.

The Department of Labor and Industry shall provide administrative support for the Task Force.

Given the diverse composition of the Task Force, meetings may be conducted in person throughout the state or remotely as determined by the presiding officer.

REPORT

By September 2, 2026, the Task Force shall provide an initial written report to the Governor with recommendations and strategies to address professions within occupational licensing boards in the State of Montana, including:

- whether the unregulated practice of an occupation or profession creates a direct, immediate, or foreseeable hazard to the public health, safety, or welfare;
- if there is a public benefit provided by licensure;
- if licensure significantly increases the cost of service to the public;
- if the scope of practice for a profession is readily identifiable and distinguishable from the scope of practice of other professions and occupations;
- if an occupation or profession requires a specialized skill or training for which nationally recognized standards of education and training exist;
- if qualifications for licensure are justified;
- if unnecessary barriers to entry exist for applicants;
- whether existing licensing requirements contribute to workforce shortages or access constraints in rural frontier communities;
- whether licensure portability, reciprocity, or endorsement pathways could expand access to qualified professionals, particularly in rural and underserved areas;
- whether licensing structures are aligned with state and federal rural health transformation initiatives, including Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Rural Health Transformation Program;
- if public support exists for continued licensure for each profession; and
- if the state should implement a sunset review of licensing boards.

The Task Force's report shall include recommendations and strategies for proposed legislation to be considered at the 2027 Montana Legislative Session.

TERMINATION

The Task Force shall cease to exist on May 1, 2027, unless rescinded earlier or renewed by subsequent executive order.

COMPENSATION

Council Members shall be entitled to reasonable travel expense reimbursement under Mont. Code Ann. § 2-15-122.

THIS ORDER is effective immediately.



GIVEN under my hand and the GREAT SEAL of the State of Montana this day of January 2026



A blue ink signature of "Greg Gianforte" is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and appears to be "Greg" on the left and "Gianforte" on the right.

GREG GIANFORTE, Governor

ATTEST:



A blue ink signature of "Christi Jacobson" is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and appears to be "Christi" on the left and "Jacobson" on the right.

CHRISTI JACOBSEN, Secretary of State