2023 Alaska Nurse Licensure Compact Survey
(Update, 1-12-24)

ABSTRACT

   Purpose: The goal of the current survey is to gather Alaska nurses' views on the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) and to address any possible concerns regarding the adoption of the NLC. **Methods:** This online survey was conducted by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), in partnership with the Alaska Board of Nursing (AK BON). The survey instrument was designed by NCSBN with input from the AK BON. The subjects of the current survey are all nurses holding an active registered nurse (RN) or licensed practical nurse (LPN) license in Alaska. **Procedures:** The Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing pulled a list of all actively licensed RNs and LPNs as of October 17, 2023, which was a total of 20,870 licensees. The survey was sent via email or mail, depending on the nurse's communication preference with the Alaska Board of Nursing, to each of those nurses on October 30, 2023. The survey closed on November 30, 2023. **Results:** In total, 4,593 nurses completed the current survey, with an approximate response rate of 22%.

   Most respondents (92%) supported Alaska joining the NLC, and only 5% opposed. The high support rates were consistent regardless of respondents' union membership, practice experience, primary state of residency, etc. The current survey mirrors the findings reported in the 2019 Alaska Compact survey. The main reasons for supporting Alaska in adopting the NLC included increased mobility, access to care, and cost-effectiveness of the licensure process. The main concerns raised by respondents who opposed the NLC included unsafe practices from nurses out of state, potential loss of

union bargaining power, and weakening of the job market for Alaska nurses.

Conclusion: The vast majority of responding nurses support Alaska joining the NLC.

Background of the Study

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) developed the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) to allow for mutual recognition of state licenses among participating states in 2000. The NLC streamlines nurse mobility and promotes the standardization of nursing practice regulations (Evans, 2015; Litchfield, 2010; Poe, 2008; Thomas & Thomas, 2018). To further increase access to care and enhance public protection, NCSBN promoted an enhanced NLC in 2015 (Alexander, 2016; Fotsch, 2018). The enhanced NLC was implemented in January 2018. Currently, 41 jurisdictions have enacted the NLC (NCSBN, n.d.).

In 2019, one year after the implementation of the enhanced NLC, the AK BON, in partnership with NCSBN conducted the 2019 Alaska Compact Survey of all nurses licensed in Alaska to gather their views on the adoption of the NLC. A total of 3,573 nurses participated in the 2019 survey. The survey indicated 92% (3,259 of 3,527) of respondents supported Alaska joining the NLC at the time.

The 2022 National Workforce Survey Study projects a significant nursing shortage in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, absent some form of policy intervention to support nurses who are burned out and overworked (Martin et al., 2023; Smiley, et al, 2023). In response, policymakers and researchers are exploring licensure compacts as a long-term policy option to mitigate healthcare workforce crises and improve access to care. To gather current opinions from Alaska nurses on the NLC for decision-making, the AK BON, in collaboration with NCSBN, conducted the 2023 Alaska Compact survey.

METHODOLOGY

This was a descriptive online survey of all nurses who hold an active RN or LPN license in Alaska. The survey instrument was developed by NCSBN in collaboration with the AK BON. It comprised ten questions regarding nurses' opinions about Alaska joining the compact, as well as basic details regarding their license and practice (Appendix). It was estimated to take fewer than five minutes to complete the survey. NCSBN designed and maintained the online survey via the Qualtrics platform. On October 30, 2023, the AK BON distributed the study announcement with an anonymous survey link developed by NCSBN to about 20,000 study subjects. The online survey was closed on November 30, 2023.

Data Analysis and Confidentiality

Data were exported from Qualtrics into an Excel file (Microsoft, Redmond, WA). Standard descriptive analysis was performed on fixed-response items using SAS version 9.4 (Cary, NC). The current survey did not collect identifiable personal information, such as the name of the participants. The survey was distributed using a general survey link. Only aggregate data were analyzed and reported.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Study Subjects

A total of 4,593 respondents participated in the survey and 60% of them ($n = 2,735$) considered Alaska their primary residence (**Table 1**). The 2019 survey revealed that 57% of the respondents considered Alaska their primary residence.

Table 1. Primary Residency in Alaska

	2023 Survey (4,593)		2019 Survey (N = 3,573)	
	Percent	*n*	Percent	n
Yes	59.6	2,735	56.5	2,018
No	40.5	1,858	43.5	1,555

When asked whether Alaska was the first state where they ever held a nursing license, one-quarter of respondents answered yes (**Table 2**). This is a new question asked in the 2023 survey.

Table 2. Alaska is the First State to Receive a Nurse License

	2023 Survey N = 4,565	
	Percent	*n*
Yes	25.1	1,144
No	74.9	3,421

Most responding nurses (95%) hold an RN license, while 4% hold an LPN license. Table 3 showed that 473 respondents (10%) also hold an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) license.

Table3. Type of License Held

	2023 Survey (N = 4,559)		2019 Survey (N = 3,495)	
	Percent	*N**	Percent	N*
RN	94.7	4,319	93.5	3,268
LPN	4.3	196	5.7	199
APRN	10.4	473	8.4	295

*Note. Respondents could hold more than one license, such as RN and LPN.

Over fifty percent of respondents (53%) were direct care nurses, while 20% specified some other roles, which included certified registered nurse anesthetist; nurse practitioner; certified nurse midwife, travel nurse, etc. (**Table 4**). The 2019 report shows

that 58% of the respondents were direct care nurses, slightly higher than the current

report (53%).

Table 4. Primary Role in Nursing?

	2023 Survey (N = 4,559)		*2019 Survey (N = 3,504)*	
	Percent	*n*	Percent	n
Telephone triage nurse	5.8	262	4.4	153
Transport nurse	1.2	54	0.9	33
Case manager nurse	9.7	443	7.1	249
Nurse administration/manager	7.4	338	7.5	263
Direct care nurse	53.4	2,436	57.9	2,029
Nurse educator	3.0	136	4.3	149
Other	19.5	890	17.9	628

Most respondents (98%, *n* = 4,479) were employed in a position that required a

nursing license in the past 24 months. The current survey further shows that 62% of

respondents had provided nursing services and/or communicated with a patient or client

who was located in a state other than Alaska (**Table 5**).

Table 5. Practiced in the Past 24 Months with Patients/Clients Outside of Alaska

2023 Survey (N= 4,559)		*2019 Survey (N = 3,504)*	
Percent	*n*	Percent	n
61.6	2,810	63.9	2,240
38.4	1,749	36.1	1,264

Sixty-four percent of respondents ($n = 2,911$) also held an active nursing license in another state (**Table 6**).

Table 6. Hold a License Outside of Alaska

	2023 Survey (N = 4,572)		2019 Survey (N = 3,527)	
	Percent	*n*	Percent	n
Yes	63.7	2,911	60.9	2,148
No	36.3	1,661	39.1	1,379

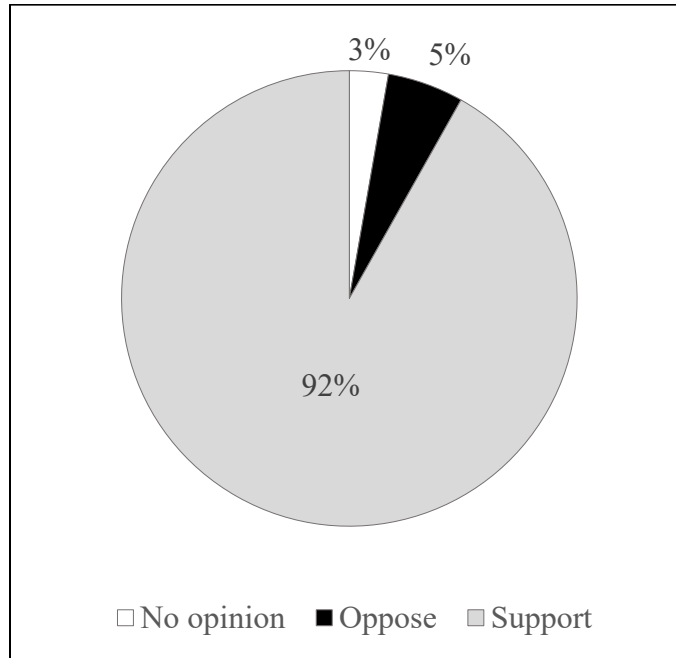Additionally, 23% of respondents reported that they were members of a union during employment (**Table 7**).

Table 7. Union Membership during Employment

	2023 Survey (N = 4,593)		2019 Survey (N =3,466)	
Union Membership	*Percent*	*n*	Percent	n
Yes	23.4	1,074	21.6	749
No	76.6	3,519	78.4	2,717

Table 8 shows most respondents (92%, $n = 4,199$) support Alaska joining the compact (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1. Nurses' Opinions about Alaska Joining the NLC

(*N* = 4,572)

Table 8. In Favor of Alaska Joining the Compact

	2023 Survey (N = 4,572)		*2019 Survey (N =3,527)*	
	Percent	*n*	*Percent*	*n*
Yes (in favor)	91.8	4,199	92.4	3,259
No (opposed)	5.4	247	3.4	119
No Opinion	2.8	126	4.2	149

High levels of support for Alaska adopting the NLC were identified among various respondent sub-groups (**Table 9**). The highest support (90% and above) was indicated in the following group of nurses, consistent from the 2019 survey report:

- Considered Alaska their primary residency (96% in 2023; 97% in 2019)

- Practiced outside of Alaska (96% in both 2023 and 2019)

- Held a license outside of Alaska (95% in 2023; 96% in 2019)

- Did not belong to a union (94% in both 2023 and 2019)

- Practice nursing in the past two years (92% in 2023; 93% in 2019)

- Held the first nurse license outside of Alaska (94% in 2023).

Table 9. Opinions about Alaska Joining the Compact

Sub-group		In Favor of Joining the Compact		
		Yes	No	No Opinion
Primary residency in Alaska	Yes	89.2 (2,430)	7.5 (205)	3.3 (89)
	No	95.7 (1,769)	2.3 (42)	2.0 (37)
Practiced nursing within the past 24 months	Yes	92.1 (4,110)	5.3 (236)	2.6 (118)
	No	82.4 (89)	10.2 (11)	7.4 (8)
Practiced out of Alaska in the past 24 months	Yes	95.5 (2,683)	2.9 (80)	1.7 (47)
	No	86.0 (1,504)	9.6 (167)	4.5 (78)
Member of a union during employment	Yes	84.8 (909)	12.2 (131)	3.0 (32)
	No	94.0 (3,290)	3.3 (116)	2.7 (94)
Hold a license outside of Alaska	Yes	95.0 (2,766)	3.2 (94)	1.8 (51)
	No	86.3 (1,433)	9.2 (153)	4.5 (75)
Hold the first nurse license in Alaska	Yes	86.4 (988)	9.8 (112)	3.9 (44)
	No	93.7 (3,204)	4.0 (135)	2.4 (82)

The current survey also asked respondents to specify why they are for or against Alaska joining the compact. Two text boxes were provided for respondents' free-text comments. A total of 204 respondents shared their reasons.

Benefits of Alaska Joining the Compact (*N* = 172)

- Increases care for patients.

- Reduces nursing shortage by mobilizing nursing workforce among 41 jurisdictions.

- Eliminates costs and burdens of applying for and maintaining multiple state licenses.

- Facilitates across-state practice, particularly benefits military spouses who need to relocate.

- Eases the work for travel nurses.

Stated Concerns of Alaska Joining the Compact (*N* = 32)

- Patient safety. Unsafe nurses may practice in Alaska from other states, leading to potential deficiencies in quality control.

- Revenue loss for Boards of Nursing and potential license fee increase for nurses due to the implementation of the NLC.

- Different scope of practice across states. Do not want to be subject to the restrictions put in place in other Compact states such as restricting access to abortion services.

- Destroys the nurse bargaining power with unions.

- Weakens the job market and lowers the wages for Alaska nurses. More travel nurses lead to negative outcomes in hospitals.

Finally, 87% of the respondents (*n* = 3,966) showed their interest in applying for a Compact license if the opportunity becomes available. This proportion has remained unchanged since the 2019 report (87%, *n* = 3,058).

LIMITATIONS

This study relied upon voluntary self-reported data. The current survey was distributed to all Alaska licensed nurses via an anonymous web link. We were unable to track the exact response rate and target subsequent communications directly to non-respondents following the survey launch.

DISCUSSION

Over four thousand nurses participated in the current survey. On an assumption that non-response is random, at the 95% confidence level, the maximum margin of error

for the findings from the current survey is less than ±1.48%. In line with the 2019 survey findings, most respondents (92%) are in favor of Alaska joining the compact. Patient safety is the major concern raised by less than 1% of opponents. Studies consistently show that the uniform NLC licensure requirements provide additional safety layers for public protection through a mandatory criminal background check, and require no active discipline on a license, and no current enrollment in an alternative-to-discipline program. According to Nursys, the national nursing licensure and discipline database, the annual discipline rate for nurses holding a multistate license is lower than the nurses holding a single state license in the same jurisdiction, suggesting nurses holding a Compact license are safe practitioners (Zhong et al., 2022; Zhong et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

The vast majority (92%) of responding nurses support Alaska joining the NLC, and only a small fraction (5%) oppose. Many respondents believe their work would be made easier and more effective through the implementation of the NLC in Alaska.

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Appendix: 2023 Alaska Compact Survey Instrument

The Alaska Board of Nursing (AK BON) is seeking your input on the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC).

 The NLC allows a nurse who holds one multi-state license issued by a Compact state to practice in any other Compact state without obtaining additional licenses. Currently, 41 jurisdictions have enacted the NLC legislation in the United States. The NLC facilitates cross-border practice and allows a nurse to move freely among Compact states without obtaining a license from each.

To better understand your opinions of joining the NLC, please answer the following questions:

Q1. In the past 24 months, have you been employed in a position that required a nursing license?
□   Yes
□   No

Q2. During that employment, were you a member of a nursing union?
□   Yes
□   No

Q3. Is Alaska your state of primary residence?
□   Yes
□   No

Q4. Is Alaska the first state where you ever held a nursing license?
□   Yes
□   No

Q5. Other than Alaska, do you hold an active nursing license in any other state?
□   Yes
□   No

Q6. Would you be in favor of Alaska joining the Nurse Licensure Compact?
□   Yes (please provide reason)_____
□   No (please provide reason) _____
□   No opinion

Q7. If Alaska were to join the Nurse Licensure Compact, would you be interested in applying for a Compact license?
□   Yes
□   No

Q8. What type of license do you currently hold? (Select all that apply)

- □ LPN/VN
- □ RN
- □ APRN

Q9. In the past 24 months, have you provided nursing services and/or communicated with a patient, client, or student who was in a state other than Alaska?

- □ Yes
- □ No

Q10. What is your primary role in nursing? (Select one only)
- □ Telephone Triage Nurse
- □ Transport Nurse
- □ Case manager nurse
- □ Nurse Administrator/Manager
- □ Direct Care Nurse
- □ Nurse Educator
- □ Other_____ (please specify)

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Zhong, Research, NCSBN at ezhong@ncsbn.org. Thank you for your participation. Thank you very much for your time and participation!