



# Career License Opportunities for ALL!

An overview of career licenses in California, including information on Senate Bill 1159

## WHAT IS A CAREER LICENSE?

A professional license authorizes practitioners of certain professions, such as medicine, law, social work and cosmetology, to work in a given industry. These licenses usually exist to regulate a standard of skill and quality of service in certain professions. Usually regulated by state governments, professional licenses are overseen by state licensing boards or bureaus. Requirements to successfully gain a professional license vary between industries and states, and can consist of a combination of written examinations, demonstrated work experience and higher education.

## WHICH CAREERS REQUIRE A LICENSE?

In the state of California, a professional license is needed to practice a wide variety of roles, from attorneys, real estate agents, dentists and accountants to barbers, security guards, professional athletes and engineers.



*Professional licenses in California are regulated by the Department of Consumer Affairs:*

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) is here to protect and serve California consumers while ensuring a competent and fair marketplace. DCA helps consumers learn how to protect themselves from unscrupulous and unqualified individuals. The Department also protects professionals from unfair competition by unlicensed practitioners.

To protect and serve consumers, the Department issues licenses in more than 100 business and 200 professional categories, including doctors, dentists, contractors, cosmetologists and automotive repair facilities. The Department of Consumer Affairs includes 41 regulatory entities (25 boards, nine bureaus, four committees, two programs, and one commission). These entities establish minimum qualifications and levels of competency for licensure. They also license, register, or certify practitioners, investigate complaints and discipline violators. The committees, commission and boards are semiautonomous bodies whose members are appointed by the Governor and the Legislature.

Visit [here](http://www.dca.ca.gov/about_dca/profession.shtml) ([http://www.dca.ca.gov/about\\_dca/profession.shtml](http://www.dca.ca.gov/about_dca/profession.shtml)) for a full, alphabetical list of professions regulated by the Department of Consumer affairs.

## SB 1159: OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREER LICENSES REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS!

Senate Bill 1159, [signed into law](#) by Governor Brown in September of 2014, will allow individual applicants for professional licenses to use *either* a Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) in their process to seek licensure. The bill also prohibits, except as specified, any entity within the department [of consumer affairs] from denying licensure to an applicant based on his or her citizenship status or immigration status.

Formerly, only eligible individuals possessing a SSN (or partnerships possessing a federal employer identification number) could obtain a professional license in California. This first changed with a favorable January 2014 [California Supreme Court ruling](#) in the case of [Sergio Garcia](#), an undocumented attorney who had passed the state bar but was barred from licensing. That ruling however, only applied to Garcia's case; SB 1159 now expands the opportunity to apply for a license to ALL eligible applicants possessing either a SSN or an ITIN, allowing qualified professionals to openly practice their chosen careers while strengthening California's workforce. Senate Bill 1159 was authored by [Senator Ricardo Lara](#), who represents California's 33<sup>rd</sup> Senate District in Southeast Los Angeles County.

### SB 1159 BENEFITS & LIMITATIONS

*SB 1159 will help:*

- Skilled workers in a variety of industries who meet all other licensing qualifications to join the formal economy and begin practicing their chosen profession
- Meet the demand in industries with a shortage of skilled workers, like nursing and landscaping
- Immigrants and others using an ITIN to increase their earning potential and improve their economic self-sufficiency
- Increase the contribution of immigrants to California's state economy
- Encourage immigrant youth to finish school

However, it's important to note that immigrants face many barriers to working in the state of California including, but not limited to, the need for professional licensure. While an important step in the right direction, advocacy is still needed to bridge the gap between licensing and sustained, paid work, from increasing access to programs like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA), to continuing to fight for more permanent and humane reform to the U.S. immigration system, one that honors this country's heritage of welcoming immigrants.

### SB 1159 IMPLEMENTATION

Though currently already state law, Senate Bill 1159 requires all licensing bodies to implement its provisions **no later than January 1, 2016.**

By this day, eligible applicants should be able to apply for a professional license in California using either an SSN or ITIN. To learn more about specific licensing requirements for each profession, visit the appropriate board or bureau for details. Visit [here](http://www.dca.ca.gov/about_dca/entities.shtml) ([http://www.dca.ca.gov/about\\_dca/entities.shtml](http://www.dca.ca.gov/about_dca/entities.shtml)) for a full list of each board and bureau.

### USEFUL RESOURCES

- [Senate Bill 1159](#) (full legislation text)
- [Compendium of State and Federal Immigration-related Litigation and Legislation Concerning Higher Education](#), 2004-2015 (includes section on professional licenses) - Professor Michael Olivas, University of Houston Law Center
- [Life After College Guide for Undocumented Students](#) (includes section on earning a living) – Educators for Fair Consideration

#### SB 1159 IN THE PRESS

- Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy, Vol. 27 – [Realizing the DREAM: Expanding Access to Professional Licenses for California's Undocumented Immigrants \(authored by Senator Ricardo Lara\)](#)
- Los Angeles Times - [California bill would ease professional licensing rules for immigrants](#)
- Southern California Public Radio - [Immigrants without legal status able to apply for professional licenses in CA](#)
- Think Progress - [Some Undocumented Immigrants Can Now Apply For Professional Licenses In California](#)
- The Press Enterprise - [New law lets immigrants apply for licenses](#)
- Balitang America - [Undocumented Workers Welcome New Ca Work License Law](#)
- Univision - [California otorgará licencias profesionales a indocumentados](#)
- La Opinión - [Inmigrantes indocumentados pueden obtener licencias profesionales en California](#)