

**SENATE
STATE OF MINNESOTA
NINETY-THIRD SESSION**

S.F. No. 4814

(SENATE AUTHORS: HOWE)

DATE
03/11/2024

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Introduction and first reading
Referred to State and Local Government and Veterans

OFFICIAL STATUS

1.1 A bill for an act
1.2 relating to state government; requiring plain language in written materials for
1.3 state-issued professional licensing; requiring a report; proposing coding for new
1.4 law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 15.

1.5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.6 Section 1. [15.996] PLAIN LANGUAGE IN LICENSE WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS.

1.7 Subdivision 1. **Definitions.** For purposes of this subdivision, the following terms have
1.8 the meanings given:

1.9 (1) "plain language standards" means the requirements specified in subdivision 2,
1.10 paragraph (a), and the requirements of the Plain Writing Act, Public Law 111-274, and
1.11 governor's Executive Order 14-07; and

1.12 (2) "written examination" means the written portion of an examination in English for a
1.13 license issued by the state.

1.14 Subd. 2. **Plain language.** (a) By February 1, 2025, each commissioner must implement
1.15 plain language standards for the written portion of a knowledge examination to ensure the
1.16 written examination is a fair assessment of the license applicant's knowledge of relevant
1.17 subject matter. The new written portion of the knowledge examination, to the extent
1.18 practicable, must be organized to serve the reader's needs and written using clear, simplified
1.19 language with the following grammatical standards:

1.20 (1) "you" and other pronouns address the test-taker directly;

1.21 (2) utilize the active voice;

1.22 (3) use short, simple sentences and straightforward questions;

- 2.1 (4) avoid complex and compound sentence structures;
- 2.2 (5) utilize commonly used and familiar words;
- 2.3 (6) avoid turning verbs into nouns through nominalization;
- 2.4 (7) minimize the use of abbreviations;
- 2.5 (8) place words carefully to avoid large gaps between the subject, verb, and object in a
- 2.6 sentence;
- 2.7 (9) avoid confusing terms such as "either, or" and "neither, nor";
- 2.8 (10) utilize simple verb tenses, including the simple present verb tense where practicable,
- 2.9 to explain confusing or complex concepts;
- 2.10 (11) omit double negatives and terms like "except for," "unless," and "indicated
- 2.11 otherwise";
- 2.12 (12) avoid hidden terms and use concrete, familiar words to describe confusing or
- 2.13 complex concepts or items;
- 2.14 (13) omit excess and unnecessary words;
- 2.15 (14) use the word "must" to express requirements;
- 2.16 (15) put exceptions at the end of a question;
- 2.17 (16) place modifying terms in correct locations; and
- 2.18 (17) any other recommended strategies and techniques designed to offer clear
- 2.19 communication to test-takers.
- 2.20 (b) Revisions made to the written examination must meet the plain language standards
- 2.21 of this section.
- 2.22 (c) A written examination must be reviewed for compliance with the plain language
- 2.23 standards and approved by the revisor of statutes before implementation.
- 2.24 **Sec. 2. REPORT; PLAIN LANGUAGE IMPLEMENTATION FOR LICENSING.**
- 2.25 By February 1, 2026, each commissioner must report to the chairs and ranking minority
- 2.26 members of the committees in the house of representatives and the senate with primary
- 2.27 jurisdiction for state government on the implementation of the plain language requirements
- 2.28 in Minnesota Statutes, section 15.996, for each license type issued by the commissioner.