BEFORE THE
MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Petition for Reinstatement Against: Steven H. Lopez, M.D. Physician's & Surgeon's Certificate No G 53913 Petitioner.	Case No.: 800-2025-118550 OAH No: 2025081148

ORDER OF NON-ADOPTION OF PROPOSED DECISION

The Proposed Decision of the Administrative Law Judge in the above-entitled matter has been **non-adopted.** A panel of the Medical Board of California (Board) will decide the case upon the record, including the transcript and exhibits of the hearing, and upon such written argument as the parties may wish to submit directed at whether the level of discipline ordered is sufficient to protect the public. The parties will be notified of the date for submission of such argument when the transcript of the above-mentioned hearing becomes available.

To order a copy of the transcript, please contact Kennedy Court Reporters, 920 West 17th Street, Second Floor, Santa Ana, California 92706. The telephone number is (741)835-0366.

To order a copy of the exhibits, please submit a written request to this Board.

In addition, oral argument will only be scheduled if a party files a request for oral argument with the Board within 20 days from the date of this notice. If a timely request is filed, the Board will serve all parties with written notice of the time, date and place for oral argument. Oral argument shall be directed only to the question of whether the proposed penalty should be modified. Please do not attach to your written argument any documents that are not part of the record as they cannot be considered by the Panel. The Board directs the parties' attention to Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations, sections 1364.30 and 1364.32 for additional requirements regarding the submission of oral and written argument.

Please remember to serve the opposing party with a copy of your written argument and any other papers you might file with the Board. The mailing address of the Board is as follows:

MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
2005 Evergreen Street, Suite 1200
Sacramento, CA 95815-3831
(916) 263-2442
Attention: Casandra Beltran

Date: August 20, 2026



Veling Tsai, M.D., Chair
Panel A

BEFORE THE
MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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In the Matter of the Petition for Reinstatement by:

STEVEN H. LOPEZ, M.D., Petitioner

Case No. 800-2025-118550

OAH No. 2025081148

PROPOSED DECISION

Marcie Larson, Administrative Law Judge (ALJ), Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), State of California, heard this matter by videoconference on May 11, 2026, from Sacramento, California.

Nina Y. Benjamin, Deputy Attorney General, represented the Attorney General of the State of California pursuant to Government Code section 11522.

Fredrick M. Ray, Attorney at Law, represented petitioner Steven H. Lopez, M.D., who appeared at the hearing.

Evidence was received, the record closed, and the matter was submitted for decision on May 11, 2026.

FACTUAL FINDINGS

Background and Procedural History

1. On October 29, 1984, the Medical Board of California (Board) issued petitioner Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate Number G 53913 (certificate). Petitioner's certificate was revoked on June 14, 1995.

2. On March 15, 1994, Dixon Arnett, the former Executive Director of the Board, signed and thereafter filed an Accusation against petitioner. Complainant sought to impose discipline on petitioner's certificate based on the following convictions and the underlying conduct: a September 12, 1990 conviction for driving a vehicle with 0.10 percent or more of alcohol in his blood, a violation of Vehicle Code section 23152, subdivision (b), a misdemeanor; a February 26, 1992 conviction for urinating in public, a violation of Los Angeles County Health Code section 11.16.050; and a June 9, 1992 conviction for driving a vehicle with 0.08 percent or more of alcohol in his blood, a violation of Vehicle Code section 23152, subdivision (b), a misdemeanor.

During the arrest that led to petitioner's June 9, 1992 conviction, petitioner was in possession of cocaine. As part of petitioner's criminal sentence, he was ordered to complete a drug diversion program.

3. Petitioner failed to timely file a Notice of Defense to the Accusation. As a result, the Board issued a Default Decision revoking petitioner's certificate effective on June 14, 1995.

Petition for Reinstatement

4. On February 25, 2025, petitioner signed and thereafter filed with the Board the instant Petition for Reinstatement (Petition) in which he seeks reinstatement of his certificate. Petitioner has not previously applied for reinstatement. Petitioner submitted several documents in support of his Petition, including a written statement, character letters, performance evaluations and proof of completion of education courses. Three character witnesses testified on petitioner's behalf.

PETITION FOR PENALTY RELIEF REPORT

5. On July 8, 2025, Jillian Alexander, Special Investigator for the Board, completed a Petition for Penalty Relief report detailing the investigation she conducted in response to petitioner's request for reinstatement. Special Investigator Alexander did not testify at hearing. Special Investigator Alexander detailed in her report that she completed interviews with petitioner and two physicians who provided letters of support, Ismael Guerrero, M.D. and Rene A. Vega, M.D.

PETITIONER'S TESTIMONY AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

6. In his written statement and testimony, petitioner detailed his background, experience, the underlying cause of his certificate discipline, his rehabilitation efforts and why he is requesting reinstatement of his certificate.

7. Petitioner is 71 years old. He grew up in a poor family who worked in the fields in the Central Valley of California. Petitioner was determined to make a different life for himself. In 1976, he graduated from Occidental College with a biology degree. He applied for medical school but was not accepted. However, he was accepted to a Master of Public Health program at the University of California, Los Angeles. Petitioner

obtained his master's degree and, in 1979, was accepted to the University of California, Irvine School of Medicine. In 1983, petitioner graduated with his medical degree and completed his internship and residency at the Los Angeles Children's Hospital where he specialized in pediatrics. Petitioner worked as a pediatrician serving the Hispanic community in the Los Angeles area until his certificate was revoked in 1995.

8. While a practicing physician, petitioner "was able to strike a balance between working hard and living hard — exploring the excitement and nightlife of Los Angeles." However, in 1992, things changed. Petitioner was deeply affected by the AIDS epidemic. Many of petitioner's friends died from the disease. In 1992, petitioner's brother, who was also his roommate, took his life rather than suffer the pain from incurable AIDS. The loss of his brother and many close friends devastated petitioner. He used drugs and alcohol to cope. In 1992, he was arrested twice for driving under the influence of alcohol.

9. By 1994, petitioner was no longer able to practice medicine due to his addiction. He resigned his medical position and returned to his home in Fresno, California. Petitioner explained that after the Accusation was filed against him, he could not face the Board. As a result, he did not respond to the Accusation. Petitioner explained that he chose drugs over his medical career.

10. Petitioner explained that from 1994 until 2006, his "life was a repetitive Groundhog Day." He would stop using drugs and alcohol for a few months. He would get a good job, relapse, and lose the job. In October 2006, petitioner "hit rock bottom." He was arrested for possession of methamphetamine. Petitioner hired an attorney who changed his life. The attorney helped petitioner qualify for a drug rehabilitation program, in lieu of a conviction. To qualify, petitioner had to attend four

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings per week. Petitioner explained that NA changed his life. Petitioner's sobriety date is October 26, 2006.

11. Petitioner explained that NA gave him the "tools to finally confront [his] addiction with the seriousness that it deserved." NA also "taught [him] lessons, introduced [him] to an understanding community, and installed a sense of higher power in [him]." Petitioner has worked with the same NA same sponsor, Louis Torch, for the last 19 years. Mr. Torch wrote petitioner a letter of support and testified at hearing.

12. Petitioner has consistently attended two to three NA meetings per week for the last 19 years. Through NA, petitioner has a "lifeline, a family, and a sense of purpose." Petitioner has also helped others with their recovery journey. Petitioner takes active service and leadership roles in NA. He also sponsors another member of NA.

13. Additionally, 20 years ago petitioner became part of a weekly bible study with his lifelong friend Leonard Carrillo, who wrote a letter of support and testified at hearing. Petitioner explained that "bible study and NA go hand-in-hand and have taught [him] to be spiritually centered and to pursue the best version of [himself]". Petitioner explained that he "strive[s] to be patient, tolerant, open-minded, and honest." NA and his bible study group have taught petitioner "valuable life lessons about faith, hope and daily practice of principles of treating each person with respect and dignity, and confront each day with positivity and purpose."

14. Petitioner's sobriety coincided with a new profession. In October 2006, petitioner was hired as a Health Facility Evaluator - Life Safety Code Evaluator with the California Department of Public Health (Department). Petitioner's duties included

surveying health care facilities for compliance with state and federal regulations pertaining to fire and safety.

15. In October 2008, petitioner was promoted to a Health Facility Evaluator supervisor position. In this role he supervised and guided registered nurse evaluators who surveyed health care facilities for federal and state regulations. In October 2013, petitioner was promoted to a Staff Services Manager in the Department's Licensing and Certification section. Petitioner's duties included managing, tracking, and monitoring the workload timeframes and workload completion of survey activities performed by the registered nurse surveyor staff.

16. Because petitioner was supervising nurses, he was required to obtain his registered nursing license. Petitioner attended nursing school at Fresno City College. He completed the program and, in September 2014, he applied for his registered nursing (RN) license with the Board of Registered Nursing (RN Board). Petitioner's license was initially denied due to the revocation of his certificate. However, after petitioner presented the RN Board with information regarding his rehabilitation efforts, he was granted an unrestricted RN license, with a public reproval.

17. In April 2015, petitioner was promoted to the position of District Manager, Center for Health Care Quality, Field Operations North, at the Department's Fresno District Office. In this role, petitioner oversees a jurisdiction that covers six counties and has regulatory oversight for many provider types, including hospitals, clinics, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, and dialysis clinics. He manages 75 employees including registered nurse surveyors and professional, non-licensed administrative staff. Petitioner still holds this position and has an active RN license with no history of discipline since it was issued. Petitioner also submitted performance evaluations demonstrating that he exceeds expectations on areas evaluated.

18. Petitioner is requesting the reinstatement of his certificate so he can provide primary care in a clinic that provides care to the Hispanic community in the Frenso area. To prepare, petitioner has completed extra education courses and taken the continuing education required for physicians biannually. He has also taken the mandatory courses listed on the Board's website.

19. Petitioner assures the Board that if he is given the opportunity to practice medicine again, he will not lose sight of the gift he has been given. He will dedicate himself to serving those in need and giving back to his community.

Character Evidence

20. Petitioner submitted several letters of support and three character witnesses testified on his behalf. Mr. Carrillo is a retired principal from the Fresno Unified School District. Mr. Carrillo and petitioner have been friends since 1973, when they attended Occidental College. They have remained friends ever since. Mr. Carrillo is part of the bible study with petitioner. Mr. Carrillo has witnessed petitioner's incredible recovery journey over the past almost 20 years. Mr. Carrillo described petitioner as a caring and compassionate person who is dedicated to improving his life and the lives of others. Mr. Carrillo believes petitioner will be an asset to the medical community.

21. Rene Vega, M.D., is a board-certified family physician. Dr. Vega and petitioner have been friends since 1972, when they attended Occidental College. They met at student orientation. Dr. Vega and petitioner bonded over their similar upbringing. They lived together in college and supported each other as they completed medical school. Dr. Vega explained that he spent many hours talking to

petitioner about his struggles with substance abuse. For the past 20 years, Dr. Vega has witnessed petitioner's dedication to his sobriety.

Dr. Vega is a former member of the California Board of Medical Quality Assurance. He also served as the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Executive Officer at several health insurance plans. Dr. Vega understands the importance of ensuring that physicians are safe to practice. He believes that petitioner has undertaken the necessary steps to ensure that he has a strong foundation in his sobriety and is ready to resume his medical practice.

22. Louis D. Torch is a retired lawyer. He worked as a prosecutor for most of his legal career. Mr. Torch is a member of NA with approximately 40 years of sobriety. Mr. Torch has served as petitioner's NA sponsor for over 19 years. During that time, Mr. Torch has seen "firsthand" petitioner's dedication to his sobriety. Mr. Torch explained that petitioner worked diligently through the NA steps and followed all of Mr. Torch's recommendations. Mr. Torch described petitioner as a "stand out."

Mr. Torch explained that he and petitioner communicate regularly. Petitioner continues to work diligently on rebuilding his life. This included obtaining his RN license and seeking reinstatement of his certificate. Mr. Torch believes petitioner has done, and continues to do, the work necessary to remain sober. He has a strong support system and the tools he needs to practice medicine.

23. Petitioner also submitted several letters of support from long time friends and colleagues. They describe petitioner as a caring and compassionate person who has built a solid foundation and is dedicated to serving others. The authors of the letters are aware of petitioner's history of substance abuse and loss of his certificate. They support petitioner's efforts return to practicing medicine.

Analysis

24. Petitioner's recovery journey exemplifies how hard work and dedication can transform a person's life. Petitioner suffered from addiction for over a decade. His last arrest in 2006 was the catalyst he needed to get sober. In October 2026, petitioner began attending NA and it changed his life. Petitioner confronted his grief and the underlying causes of his substance abuse. He worked the NA steps with Mr. Torch and became part of a bible study group which went "hand in hand" with the principles he learned through NA. Petitioner's participation in NA and his bible group have continued to support his sobriety for almost 20 years.

At the same time petitioner became sober, he started a new career with the Department. Petitioner excelled in his roles and was steadily promoted. For the past decade he has served as the Department's District Manager of the Center for Health Care Quality in Fresno. He oversees six counties and manages 75 people. By all accounts he is a respected and valued employee.

Now, petitioner wants to return to practicing medicine so that he can support the Hispanic community in Fresno. He wants to practice in clinics that provide care to the underserved. Petitioner wants to demonstrate to the Board that he will not take the gift of practicing medicine for granted. To ensure that he is safe to practice, petitioner has completed continuing education and has made efforts to take courses to update his skills.

25. The objective of an administrative licensing proceeding is to protect the public. Such proceedings are not for the primary purpose of punishment. (See *Fahmy v. Medical Bd. of California* (1995) 38 Cal.App.4th 810, 817.) When all the evidence is considered, petitioner demonstrated that reinstatement of his certificate is warranted,

after completing a clinical competency program. This will ensure petitioner is safe to return to the practice of medicine.

LEGAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Under Business and Professions Code section 2307, a person whose certificate has been revoked may petition the Board for reinstatement at least five from the effective date of the decision ordering the revocation. (Bus. & Prof. Code, § 2307, subd. (b)(1).)

2. Business and Profession Code section 2428 provides in relevant part that:

> (a) A person who voluntarily cancels his or her license or who fails to renew his or her license within five years after its expiration shall not renew it, but that person may apply for and obtain a new license if he or she:
>
> (1) Has not committed any acts or crimes constituting grounds for denial of licensure under Division 1.5 (commencing with Section 475).
>
> (2) Takes and passes the examination, if any, which would be required of him or her if application for licensure was being made for the first time, or otherwise establishes to the satisfaction of the licensing authority that passes on the qualifications of applicants for the license that, with due regard for the public interest, he or she is qualified to

practice the profession or activity for which the applicant was originally licensed.

(3) Pays all of the fees that would be required if application for licensure was being made for the first time.

The licensing authority may provide for the waiver or refund of all or any part of an examination fee in those cases in which a license is issued without an examination pursuant to this section.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize the issuance of a license for a professional activity or system or mode of healing for which licenses are no longer required.

(b) In addition to the requirements set forth in subdivision (a), an applicant shall establish that he or she meets one of the following requirements: (1) satisfactory completion of at least three years of approved postgraduate training; (2) certification by a specialty board approved by the American Board of Medical Specialties or approved by the board pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 651; or (3) passing of the clinical competency written examination.

3. In considering a petition for reinstatement, the Board may consider "all activities of the petitioner since the disciplinary action was taken, the offense for which the petitioner was disciplined, the petitioner's activities during the time the certificate was in good standing, and the petitioner's rehabilitative efforts, general reputation for truth, and professional ability." (Bus. & Prof. Code, § 2307, subd. (e).)

4. In this proceeding, the burden is on petitioner to present clear and convincing evidence of rehabilitation to support his Petition. (*Housman v. Bd. of Medical Exam'rs* (1948) 84 Cal.App.2d 308, 316.) As set forth in the Factual Findings as a whole, petitioner met his burden. He presented sufficient evidence to establish that it would be consistent with public health, safety, and welfare to reinstate his certificate, with completion of a condition precedent to comply with the requirements of Business and Professions Code section 2428 and to ensure public safety. Consequently, his Petition is granted.

ORDER

The Petition for Reinstatement filed by petitioner Steven H. Lopez, M.D., is GRANTED. Upon competition of the requirements of Business and Profession Code section 2428 and the below stated condition precedent, petitioner Steven H. Lopez shall be issued a certificate by the Board.

CONDITION PRECEDENT: Clinical Competence Assessment Program

Within 60 calendar days of the effective date of this Decision, petitioner shall enroll in a clinical competence assessment program approved in advance by the Board or its designee. Petitioner shall successfully complete the program not later than six months after petitioner's initial enrollment unless the Board or its designee agrees in writing to an extension of that time.

The program shall consist of a comprehensive assessment of petitioner's physical and mental health and the six general domains of clinical competence as defined by the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education and American Board of Medical Specialties pertaining to petitioner's current or intended area of

practice. The program shall take into account data obtained from the pre-assessment, self-report forms and interview, and the Decision(s), Accusation(s), and any other information that the Board or its designee deems relevant. The program shall require petitioner's on-site participation for a minimum of three and no more than five days as determined by the program for the assessment and clinical education evaluation. Petitioner shall pay all expenses associated with the clinical competence assessment program.

At the end of the evaluation, the program will submit a report to the Board or its designee which unequivocally states whether the petitioner has demonstrated the ability to practice safely and independently. Based on petitioner's performance on the clinical competence assessment, the program will advise the Board or its designee of its recommendation(s) for the scope and length of any additional educational or clinical training, evaluation or treatment for any medical condition or psychological condition, or anything else affecting petitioner's practice of medicine. Petitoner shall comply with the program's recommendations.

Determination as to whether petitioner successfully completed the clinical competence assessment program is solely within the program's jurisdiction.

Petitioner shall not practice medicine until petitioner has successfully completed the program and has been so notified by the Board or its designee in writing.

DATE: May 21, 2026

Marcie Larson
Marcie Larson (May 21, 2026 11:23:21 PDT)

MARCIE LARSON

Administrative Law Judge

Office of Administrative Hearings