

February 27, 2024

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Kevin Cramer
United States Senate
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Senators Durbin and Cramer:

On behalf of the 52 undersigned organizations, we are writing to strongly support S. 3211, the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act.

The United States is facing an urgent health care workforce shortage that is only expected to get worse over the next decade. Shortages of physicians and nurses contribute to increased wait times and reduced overall access to health services, which ultimately leads to worsening health conditions and outcomes.

The United States is expected to face a shortage of up to 124,000 physicians over the next decade, with a shortfall of up to 48,000 primary care physicians, and between 21,000 and 77,100 non-primary care physicians, including up to 30,200 surgical specialists. Federal data on the nursing workforce suggest the US could need over 190,000 registered nurses each year over the next decade, complicated by high levels of turnover and declines among nursing support staff. The negative impact of this impending shortage will be particularly acute on underserved communities, as well as rural areas. Congress, therefore, must consider short- and long-term solutions to confront this crisis and improve access to care for patients no matter where they reside.

In response to these dire statistics, we strongly support the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act. This legislation would initiate a one-time recapture of up to 40,000 unused employment-based visas – 25,000 for foreign-born nurses and 15,000 for foreign-born physicians – so they can strengthen and provide stability to the U.S. health care system. This temporary recapture period concludes three years after the date of enactment.

Under this legislation, the number of highly trained nurses in the U.S. health care system could increase by expediting the visa authorization process for qualified international nurses, who are urgently needed but stuck overseas due to backlogs and other bureaucratic delays despite many being approved to come to the United States as lawful permanent residents.

The legislation would also allow for thousands of international physicians who are currently working in this country on temporary visas with approved immigrant petitions to adjust their status. Foreign-trained physicians are more likely than U.S.-trained physicians to practice in lower income and disadvantaged communities, despite the well-documented and burdensome

delays this legislation seeks to address. This crucial policy change will enable these physicians to continue serving patients ensuring every American can access needed care.

Foreign-born physicians are an invaluable component of the U.S. health care system, comprising nearly 1 in 5 of active U.S. physicians and caring for some of the most vulnerable patient populations. In fact, in the past 20 years, more than 20,000 J-1 IMGs have gone on to serve in underserved areas. H-1B physicians practicing vital specialties like geriatric medicine and nephrology also make up approximately 50 percent of active physicians. These realities necessitate that Congress continue to advance policies that help foreign-born physicians treat American patients.

Thank you for continuing to elevate the integral role immigrant health care workers play in the U.S. health care system. We look forward to working with you to advance this legislation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Eli Greenspan, Policy Advisor with Physicians for American Healthcare Access, at egreenspan@foleyhoag.com.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Headache Disorders Advocacy
The ALS Association
Ambulatory Surgery Center Association
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Home Care Medicine
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of International Healthcare Recruitment
American Association of Neuromuscular & Electrodiagnostic Medicine
The American Brain Coalition
American College of Physicians
American College of Rheumatology
American Epilepsy Society
American Gastroenterological Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Health Care Association
American Hospital Association
American Medical Association
American Organization for Nursing Leadership
American Psychiatric Association
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Neuroradiology
Anxiety & Depression Association of America
Association for Advancing Physician and Provider Recruitment

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)
Association of University Professors of Neurology
Cohen Veterans Bioscience
College of American Pathologists
Federation of American Hospitals (FAH)
Hydrocephalus Association
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Intealth
International Bipolar Foundation
Jewish Federations of North America
Miles for Migraine
MLD Foundation
National Center for Assisted Living
National Fabry Disease Foundation
National Kidney Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Rural Health Association
The Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
The Niskanen Center
North American Neuro-Ophthalmology Society (NANOS)
Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation
Physicians for American Healthcare Access
Premier Inc.
Society of Critical Care Medicine
Society of Hospital Medicine
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
SynGAP Research Fund