

April 7, 2021

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

The Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons
United States Senate
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Young
United States Senate
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
United States Senate
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
United States Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act

Dear Senators Durbin, Cornyn, Coons, Young, Leahy and Collins:

On behalf of our physician and medical student members, the American Medical Association (AMA) is writing to voice our strong support for S. 1024, the “Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act,” and to urge the Senate to pass this legislation. International Medical Graduates (IMGs) are an important part of our U.S. health care teams and serve on medical front lines across the country. Consequently, the ability to recapture 15,000 unused employment-based physician immigrant visas and 25,000 unused employment-based professional nurse immigrant visas from prior fiscal years would help enable our U.S. physicians to have the support they need and our U.S. patients to access the care they deserve during this unprecedented public health crisis.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. was already facing a serious shortage of physicians largely due to the growth and aging of the population and the impending retirements of many physicians.¹ This shortage was dramatically highlighted by the lack of physicians in certain key areas, especially rural and underserved communities, during the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced states to recall retired physicians, expand scope of practice, and amend out of state licensing laws.² This heightened demand for physicians will only continue to grow, and soon will outpace supply, leading to a projected shortfall of between 54,100 and 139,000 physicians by 2033.³ As a result, increasing the number of visas that are available to IMGs is critical to addressing this mounting shortage that has only been exacerbated by the nation’s battle against SARS-CoV-2.

¹ <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/new-findings-confirm-predictions-physician-shortage>.

² <https://nashp.org/states-address-provider-shortages-to-meet-the-health-care-demands-of-the-pandemic/>.

³ <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/us-physician-shortage-growing>.

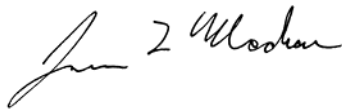
The Honorable Dick Durbin
The Honorable Chris Coons
The Honorable Patrick Leahy
The Honorable John Cornyn
The Honorable Todd Young
The Honorable Susan Collins
April 7, 2021
Page 2

Moreover, IMGs play a vital role in caring for some of the most vulnerable populations in the U.S. For example, foreign-trained physicians are more likely than U.S.-trained physicians to practice in lower-income and disadvantaged communities.⁴ As such, nearly 21 million Americans live in areas of the U.S. where foreign-trained physicians account for at least half of all physicians.⁵ Furthermore, over the past 10 years, more than 10,000 J-1 IMGs have worked in underserved communities.⁶ By increasing the number of visas available to IMGs these vulnerable populations will be better served and the overall health care system will be bolstered.

The U.S. health care workforce relies upon physicians from other countries to provide high-quality and accessible patient care.⁷ As such, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and numerous patients seeking previously postponed elective procedures, it will be more critical than ever to ensure that the U.S. fully utilizes its immigration system to help meet both delayed and ever-expanding U.S. health care needs. Therefore, to enable 15,000 physicians and 25,000 nurses to join our frontlines as quickly as possible, the AMA urges the Senate to pass the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

⁴ https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/foreign-trained_doctors_are_critical_to_serving_many_us_communities.pdf.

⁵ https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/foreign-trained_doctors_are_critical_to_serving_many_us_communities.pdf.

⁶ <https://www.kunr.org/post/visa-program-enables-foreign-doctors-work-underserved-communities#stream/0>.

⁷ https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/17/17-965/40128/20180327105855912_17-965%20Amicus%20Br.%20Proclamation.pdf.