

December 13, 2023

The Honorable Dick 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

Re: Support for the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act

Dear Senators Durbin and Cramer:

On behalf of our physician and medical student members, the American Medical Association (AMA) is writing in strong support for S. 3211, the “Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act,” and to urge the Senate to pass this legislation. International Medical Graduates (IMGs) are an important part of 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 (1992-2021) would help enable U.S. physicians to have the support they need and U.S. patients to access the care they deserve.

The U.S. is facing a serious shortage of physicians largely due to the growth and aging of the population and the impending retirement of many physicians.<sup>1</sup> This shortage is dramatically highlighted by the lack of physicians in certain key areas, especially rural and underserved communities. As this heightened demand for physicians continues to grow, the need for physicians will continue to outpace supply, leading to a projected shortfall of nearly 124,000 physicians by 2034.<sup>2</sup> As a result, increasing the number of visas that are available to IMGs is critical to addressing this mounting shortage.

Moreover, in 2021, 25 percent of licensed U.S. physicians were IMGs, with the number of IMGs in active practice growing by nearly 18 percent since 2010.<sup>3</sup> In some specialties, such as geriatric medicine and nephrology, IMGs make up approximately 50 percent of active physicians.<sup>4</sup> In other areas, IMGs make up about 30 percent of active physicians including in more specialized areas of medicine such as infectious disease, internal medicine, and endocrinology.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is important to create and support pathways for these physicians to be able to continue to remain in the U.S. and care for their patients. As such, by increasing the number of visas available to IMGs, vulnerable populations will be better served and the overall health care system will be bolstered.

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

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aamc.org/media/54681/download>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ama-assn.org/education/international-medical-education/how-imgs-have-changed-face-american-medicine>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/workforce/interactive-data/active-physicians-who-are-international-medical-graduates-imgs-specialty-2017>.

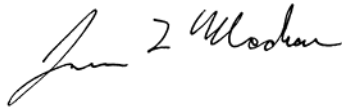
<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

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The U.S. health care workforce relies upon physicians from other countries to provide high-quality and accessible patient care which is highlighted by the fact that 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 low income and disadvantaged communities.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, nearly 21 million Americans live in areas of the U.S. where foreign-trained physicians account for at least half of all physicians.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, over the past 10 years, more than 10,000 J-1 IMGs have worked in underserved communities.<sup>8</sup>

We appreciate your leadership on this important issue and look forward to working with you to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/foreign-trained-doctors-are-critical-to-serving-many-us-communities.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.kunr.org/public-health/2018-02-08/visa-program-enables-foreign-doctors-to-work-in-underserved-communities#stream/0>.