

January 16, 2024

The Honorable Troy Nehls
U.S. House of Representatives
1104 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brad Schneider
U.S. House of Representatives
300 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Nehls and Schneider:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I want to express our support for H.R. 6980, the “Directing Our Country’s Transfer Of Residency Slots,” or the “DOCTORS Act,” which would allow unused slots from the Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act to be redistributed in the following fiscal year while ensuring that every state is still provided with 30 slots each year. This legislation would allow for additional physicians to benefit from this program while helping to alleviate the shortage of physicians overall, especially in rural and underserved areas. The AMA sees this legislation as an important addition to the larger Conrad 30 reauthorization bill, H.R. 4942, the “Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act.”

In 2021, 25 percent of licensed U.S. physicians were international medical graduates (IMGs), with the number of IMGs in active practice growing by nearly 18 percent since 2010.¹ These non-U.S. citizen IMGs play a critical role in providing health care to many Americans, especially in areas of the country with higher rates of poverty and chronic disease. For example, over the past 15 years, more than 10,000 J-1 IMGs have worked in underserved communities.² Moreover, nearly 21 million people live in areas of the U.S. where foreign-trained physicians account for at least half of all physicians.³ As such, it is important to support and create pathways for these physicians to be able to continue to remain in the U.S. and care for their patients.

Currently, resident physicians from other countries working in the U.S. on J-1 visas are required to return to their home country for two years after their residency has ended before they can apply for another visa or a green card. The Conrad 30 program allows these physicians to remain in the U.S. without having to return to their home country if they agree to practice in an underserved area for three years.

However, there are often states that do not fill all their Conrad 30 slots. For example, between fiscal year 2001 and 2021 around 13,100 slots went unfilled.⁴ Furthermore, in fiscal year 2022 alone about 441 slots

¹ <https://www.ama-assn.org/education/international-medical-education/how-imgs-have-changed-face-american-medicine>.

² <https://www.kunr.org/post/visa-program-enables-foreign-doctors-work-underserved-communities#stream/0>.

³ <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/foreign-trained-doctors-are-critical-to-serving-many-us-communities.pdf>.

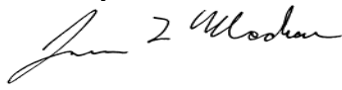
⁴ <https://www.3rnet.org/Portals/0/Documents/Conrad%20Historic%20Totals%20-%202001%20to%20Present.pdf?ver=ExFDuNCQZp7iW5BISRpw9Q%3d%3d>.

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went unfilled.⁵ With a projected shortfall of nearly 124,000 physicians by 2034, many communities, including rural and low-income urban districts, are already experiencing problems meeting their patient care needs.⁶ Therefore, it is imperative that every Conrad 30 slot that can be filled *is* filled to help alleviate these current and projected physician shortages.

IMGs play a vital role in the U.S. health care system, and the DOCTORS Act will help ensure that the Conrad 30 Program is utilized to its full extent so that patients, especially in underserved communities, continue to have access to these physicians. We appreciate your leadership on this important issue and look forward to working with you to advance this legislation, ideally as an amendment to, H.R. 4942, the “Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

⁵ <https://www.3met.org/Portals/0/Documents/Conrad%2030%20Slots%20Filled%20FFY2022.pdf?ver=KW9Nf8n5-pnO7dowqufRbQ%3d%3d>.

⁶ <https://www.aamc.org/media/54681/download>.