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April 26, 2017

The Honorable Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senate
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Heitkamp:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I want to express our support for S.898, the “Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act,” which would reauthorize and make improvements to the J-1 visa waiver program.

Currently, resident physicians from other countries working in the U.S. on J-1 visas are required to return to their home country after their residency has ended for two years before they can apply for another visa or green card. The Conrad 30 program allows these physicians to remain in the U.S. without having to return home if they agree to practice in an underserved area for three years. Many communities, including rural and low-income urban districts, have problems meeting their patient care needs and depend on the physicians in this program to provide health care services. With communities across the country facing physician shortages, the Conrad 30 program ensures that physicians who are often educated and trained in the U.S. can continue to provide care for patients.

If enacted, this legislation would reauthorize the J-1 visa waiver program for an additional three years, protecting patient access to care in medically underserved areas. We also support provisions in this bill that would make improvements to the program by requiring more transparency in employment contract terms, creating additional waivers per states, and protecting spouses and children of physicians in the program.

The Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act will help ensure continued access to care in medically underserved communities across the U.S. 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 "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD