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EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

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June 5, 2018

The Honorable L. Francis Cissna
Director
U.S. Citizenship and
Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20529

Dear Director Cissna:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to voice our concern about delays in H-1B visa processing due to increased inspection of prevailing wage data for incoming non-U.S. international medical graduates (IMGs) who have accepted positions in U.S. Graduate Medical Education (GME) programs. As you may be aware, all GME training programs in the U.S. start on or before July 1st of each year. As a result any delays in H1-B visa processing for our incoming medical residents are not only disruptive to training programs, but they impact patient care as teaching hospitals rely on these medical residents to provide care to many of our nation's most vulnerable patients.

IMGs who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents and seek entry into U.S. GME programs must obtain a visa that permits clinical training to provide medical services. Most enter the U.S. on a J-1 Exchange Visitor visa or an H-1B visa. In 2017, 3,814 non-U.S. IMGs matched in a residency training program. That number is almost a five percent increase from 2015. Non-U.S. IMGs play a critical role in providing health care to many Americans because they tend to choose primary care specialties and work in areas of the country with higher rates of poverty; they are providing important medical services to communities in need. According to a recent report, about 20.8 million Americans live in areas where at least half of the physicians are foreign-trained.

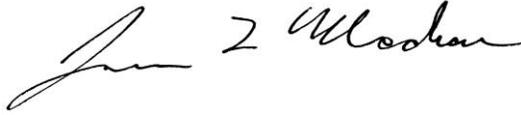
It is our understanding that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is requesting additional evidence and in some cases denying visa applications that use data from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Survey of Resident/Fellow Stipends and Benefits Report. Although the Department of Labor (DOL) provides data on most occupations, including physicians, it does not for medical residents. As a result, DOL has previously approved the use of AAMC resident stipend data for these purposes.

Again, due to the rapidly approaching start date for all GME programs, we urge you to expedite review of pending H-1B applications by non-U.S. IMGs who have been accepted to postgraduate training programs in order to avoid unnecessary delays. We believe that because the DOL has previously approved the use of AAMC resident stipend data for prevailing wage determinations, such data should continue to be accepted.

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If you have any questions or want to discuss this issue further, please contact Margaret Garikes, AMA Vice President for Federal Affairs, at margaret.garikes@ama-assn.org or by calling 202-789-7409.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a stylized "L".

James L. Madara, MD