

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20501

Kenneth Cuccinelli
Acting Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20529

Dear Mr. Vice President and Acting Director Cuccinelli:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to urge the Administration to address the situation of thousands of international medical graduates (IMGs) in temporary status, so that these physicians can maintain their lawful immigration status while responding to the urgent COVID-19 pandemic.

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 general population and the impending retirement of many physicians.¹ 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. Nearly 21 million people live in areas of the U.S. where foreign-trained physicians account for at least half of all physicians.² Individuals with serious chronic medical conditions, including diabetes, are at a higher risk of experiencing serious complications from COVID-19.³ **Our non-U.S. citizen IMGs can play an even larger role in caring for those who are seriously ill from COVID-19.**

Currently, IMGs with an H-1B status are restricted in terms of the facilities in which they are permitted to work. Also, any work outside the strict limits of the H-1B petition is a violation of the physician's H-1B status. In situations where an employer needs an IMG who possesses H-1B status to work at additional locations, the employer is required to file an amended petition, which is a time-consuming and costly process for the employer. In the current public health emergency, when many IMG physicians are severely restricted in their work locations and in the type of care they can provide (under the terms of their H-1B petitions), some nonimmigrant status physicians have seen their normal worksites closed or have been furloughed. As a result, some IMGs have been unable to work at a time when their services are greatly needed throughout the U.S. **Allowing IMG physicians to serve at multiple locations and facilities will provide greater access to health care for millions of Americans.**

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

² <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/foreign-trained-doctors-are-critical-to-serving-many-us-communities.pdf>.

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>.

Research shows that certain states and employers have, and continue to, rely heavily on H-1B visa physicians to provide health care services to their patients. Many of those very same states (New York, California, Michigan, Illinois, and Massachusetts) are also the ones that have been the most significantly impacted, thus far, by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴

Total Certified Physician LCAs by State^a

State	No. of Physician LCAs (%)	Active Patient Care Physicians (% With LCAs)
New York	1467 (13.98)	58 600 (2.50)
Michigan	945 (9.01)	23 987 (3.94)
Illinois	826 (7.87)	30 223 (2.73)
Ohio	606 (5.78)	28 097 (2.16)
Pennsylvania	602 (5.74)	34 057 (1.77)
Massachusetts	545 (5.19)	23 574 (2.31)
Texas	343 (3.27)	51 430 (0.67)
California	309 (2.95)	90 159 (0.34)
Indiana	244 (2.33)	13 571 (1.80)
Connecticut	242 (2.31)	10 531 (2.30)
Florida	223 (2.13)	46 839 (0.48)
Georgia	222 (2.12)	19 992 (1.11)
Missouri	220 (2.10)	13 919 (1.58)
Arizona	209 (1.99)	14 558 (1.44)
Minnesota	202 (1.93)	13 767 (1.47)
Maryland	197 (1.88)	17 681 (1.11)
Washington	189 (1.80)	16 884 (1.12)
Wisconsin	184 (1.75)	13 462 (1.37)
North Carolina	171 (1.63)	21 477 (0.80)
Iowa	160 (1.53)	5854 (2.73)
Virginia	159 (1.52)	18 998 (0.84)
Arkansas	156 (1.49)	5393 (2.89)
Kentucky	137 (1.31)	9195 (1.49)

NOTE: Abbreviation: LCA, labor condition application; NA, not available.

- a) Physician LCAs certified in 2016.
- b) Alaska, Utah, Idaho, and Puerto Rico all had fewer than 5 physician LCAs and are not shown.

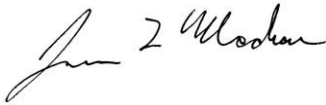
⁴ Kahn, P. and Gardin, T., *Distribution of Physicians With H-1B Visas By State and Sponsoring Employer*, JAMA Network Open, 2017. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5815043/>

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We urge the Administration to permit IMG physicians currently practicing in the U.S. with an active license and an approved immigrant petition, to apply and quickly receive authorization, to work at multiple locations and facilities with a broader range of medical services for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also urge the Administration to expedite work permits and renewal applications for all IMG physicians who are beginning their residency or a fellowship, or are currently in training. This would allow thousands of active IMG physicians to provide needed health care services to Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

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

James L. Madara, MD