

May 04, 2020

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

RE: Review of Non-Immigrant Visas

Dear Mr. Vice President:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to strongly urge the Administration to allow J-1, H-1B, and O-1 International Medical Graduates (IMGs) to be exempt from any future immigration bans or limitations so that these physicians can maintain their lawful non-immigrant status while responding to the urgent COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2017, nearly 30 percent of medical residents in the U.S. were IMGs. Moreover, about half of these IMGs are working as physicians in the U.S. on non-immigrant visas.¹

Section 6 of the April 22, 2020 Presidential *Proclamation Suspending Entry of Immigrants Who Present Risk to the U.S. Labor Market During the Economic Recovery Following the COVID-19 Outbreak*² stated that within 30 days of the proclamation's effective date non-immigrant programs would be reviewed and recommendations would be made concerning appropriate additional measures. As such, in 30 days this provision could potentially impact J-1, H-1B, and O-1 non-immigrant physician visa holders that wish to begin, or continue, to serve a vital role in caring for patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.³

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

¹ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/reports/2019/07/29/472619/immigrant-doctors-can-help-lower-physician-shortages-rural-america/>.

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-suspending-entry-immigrants-present-risk-u-s-labor-market-economic-recovery-following-covid-19-outbreak/>.

³ <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/all-visa-categories.html>.

Honorable Michael R. Pence

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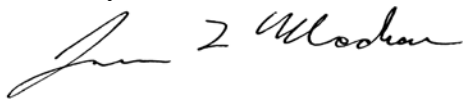
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many physicians.⁴ Non-U.S. citizen IMGs play a critical role in providing health care to many Americans, especially in areas of the country with higher rates of poverty and chronic disease. Individuals with serious chronic medical conditions, including diabetes, are at a higher risk of experiencing serious complications from COVID-19.⁵ For example, over the past 10 years, more than 10,000 J-1 IMGs have worked in underserved communities.⁶ Moreover, nearly 21 million people live in areas of the U.S. where foreign-trained physicians account for at least half of all physicians.⁷

The U.S. health care workforce relies upon health professionals and scientists from other countries to provide high-quality and accessible patient care.⁸ As such, during this pandemic, it is more critical than ever to ensure that the U.S. has a fair and efficient immigration system that strengthens the American health care system and advances the nation's health security. Thus, **the AMA strongly urges the Administration to exempt J-1, H-1B, and O-1 physicians from any future immigration bans or limitations** so that these physicians can begin or continue to provide health care to those U.S. patients battling COVID-19.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James L. Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

⁴ <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/new-findings-confirm-predictions-physician-shortage>.

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>.

⁶ <https://www.kunr.org/post/visa-program-enables-foreign-doctors-work-underserved-communities#stream/0>

⁷ https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/foreign-trained_doctors_are_critical_to_serving_many_us_communities.pdf

⁸ https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/17/17-965/40128/20180327105855912_17-965%20Amicus%20Br.%20Proclamation.pdf