
Talking Points: Support H-1Bs for Physicians and the Healthcare Workforce Act

Legislative Ask

- Support and cosponsor the bipartisan *H-1Bs for Physicians and the Healthcare Workforce Act* (H.R. 7961) to exempt physicians' and other health professionals' sponsoring institutions from the new \$100,000 H-1B visa fee, thereby helping preserve access to primary care in rural and underserved communities.

Background

- Physicians born outside the U.S. are essential to the American physician workforce, particularly in primary care, rural communities, and underserved areas. Nearly 30% of physicians practicing in the U.S. were born in other countries.
- In the last three National Resident Matching Program Main Matches, more than 2,500 non-U.S. citizen international medical graduates (IMGs) have matched in U.S. family medicine programs. That figure doesn't include those who matched through the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program.
- IMGs make up nearly one quarter of all physicians in the United States, and nearly one-third of physicians in family medicine, internal medicine, and pediatrics are foreign-trained. Many non-US citizen physicians train in the United States on J-1 visas and remain in underserved communities through waiver programs that require them to practice in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).
- The J-1 waiver program is one of the federal government's most successful physician retention tools:
 - 84% of family physicians with J-1 waivers are still practicing in HPSAs three years after residency.
 - Nearly 70% remain in those communities for six years after completing training.
- After residency, many physicians transition from J-1 status to H-1B visas in order to continue practicing in the United States and caring for patients.
- More than 11,000 physicians currently practice in the U.S. on H-1B visas, helping address shortages in primary care, psychiatry, and other high-need specialties.
- Rural and high-poverty communities rely disproportionately on H-1B physicians:
 - Rural counties have nearly doubled the percentage of H-1B physicians compared to urban counties.
 - The highest-poverty counties rely on H-1B physicians at nearly four times the rate of the lowest-poverty counties.

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- In September 2025, a new federal policy imposed a \$100,000 fee on H-1B visa applications, increasing the typical cost from approximately \$3,500 to over \$100,000 per physician.
- This fee applies regardless of profession or workforce need and creates a major financial barrier for hospitals, clinics, and communities trying to recruit physicians.
- Rural hospitals and safety-net systems are especially vulnerable because they often operate on thin margins and already struggle to recruit physicians.
- The new fee will disproportionately discourage recruitment into lower-paying but critically important specialties like family medicine, general internal medicine, and pediatrics.
- Physicians and trainees are also experiencing prolonged visa processing delays and adjudicative holds, disrupting residency programs and delaying patient care.
- Delays in physician visa processing can force residents to miss training start dates, leave positions vacant, and reduce access to care in communities already facing shortages.
- Supporting physician visa pathways is a direct investment in the primary care workforce and helps ensure patients can access timely care regardless of where they live.
- *Please note: You may be asked about the recent court decision to freeze the \$100,000 fee for all H1-B visas. If so, please just reiterate that it is important to codify a permanent exemption into law for physicians given the strong possibility that this will continue to be fought in the courts.*
- ***If you are a J-1 or H-1B visa holder or have hired or worked closely with physicians who are visa holders, please tell your personal story.***
- The bipartisan *H-1Bs for Physicians and the Healthcare Workforce Act* (H.R. 7961) seeks to address this new barrier to non-citizen physicians by exempting physicians' and other health professionals' sponsoring institutions from the new \$100,000 H-1B visa fee.
 - This legislation is led by Representatives Mike Lawler (R-NY) and Sanford Bishop (D-GA).
 - Exempting physicians from this new fee will help preserve access to primary care in rural and underserved communities.