



April 21, 2021

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Young
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Durbin, Cornyn, Young, Coons, Leahy, and Collins:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 136,700 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to share our organization's support for your legislation, the *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act* (S. 1024).

Your legislation is a crucial step to address an immediate need presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the nation's largest primary care organization, our members provide care to more than 190 million patients annually. Family physicians are acutely aware of the current shortage of primary care physicians across the country and the important role International Medical Graduates (IMGs) play in addressing this shortage. Particularly during the COVID-19 crisis, the ability to recapture 15,000 unused employment-based physician immigrant visas from prior fiscal years would enable our physicians to have the support they need and our patients to have the care they deserve.

IMGs play a vital role in caring for some of the most vulnerable populations in the U.S. IMGs make up more than 22 percent of active family physicians, and they are more likely to practice in rural, low socio-economic status, and non-white communities.^{1,2} In fact, IMGs are twice as likely to practice in health professional shortage areas.³ By increasing the number of visas available to IMGs these vulnerable populations will be better served and the overall health care system will be bolstered.

In addition to our support for your legislation, the AAFP supports the Conrad 30 J-1 visa waiver program, whose authorization expires on Sept. 30, to further help alleviate ongoing physician shortages and ensure the long-term health care needs of communities across our country are met. We are encouraged by your introduction of the *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act* and urge Congress to also act this fiscal year to extend the authorization and improve the Conrad 30 program.

STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

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Currently, resident physicians from other countries working in the U.S. on J-1 visa waivers 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 during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

The AAFP applauds the introduction of the *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act* and stands ready to help this important piece of legislation be enacted. If you have questions, please contact John Aguilar, Manager of Legislative Affairs, at jagular@aafp.org.

Sincerely,



Gary L. LeRoy, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair, American Academy of Family Physicians

¹ <https://www.ama-assn.org/education/international-medical-education/how-imgs-have-changed-face-american-medicine>

² <https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2020-06/stratcomm-aamc-physician-workforce-projections-june-2020.pdf>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4370780/>