

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington D.C., 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C., 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C., 20515

CC: U.S. Members of Congress

December 1, 2020

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned organizations represent thousands of frontline health care workers serving COVID-19 patients while ensuring millions of Americans continue to have appropriate access to health care. As we head into fall and winter flu season, we believe it is imperative that Congress take action to strengthen the health care workforce by ensuring an adequate supply of physicians and nurses.

As a country, the United States is now experiencing over 130,000 daily COVID-19 cases. These new infections are preventing millions of Americans from sending their kids back to school or returning to work, and it has forced health systems to brace for a second wave of COVID-19 just as the flu season begins in the United States. This dual threat puts increasing strain on health care workers and their families, and the threat will not truly subside until there is a vaccine widely available to the public.

As you may know, bipartisan legislation in Congress would address health care worker shortages across the country. The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (H.R. 6788, S.3599) would expedite the visa authorization process for highly trained nurses who could support hospitals facing staffing shortages, ensuring hospitals are better situated to respond to rising COVID-19 caseloads in the months ahead. An adequate supply of nursing staff is critical for hospitals to maintain services while ensuring that patients are properly cared for during the public health emergency.

The legislation would also provide protections to U.S.-trained international physicians who are vitally important to their communities, but whose visa status puts them at heightened risk should they get sick. Under current law, if these physicians were to get sick and unable to work it could

jeopardize their status in this country. Their status also limits their flexibility to provide services where they are most needed. This bill addresses these vulnerabilities by ensuring these frontline physicians are provided certainty and stability in their visa status to continue serving patients during this unprecedented time.

The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act is critical to strengthening health systems' capacity as we brace for a second wave of COVID-19 cases. As we've seen since the public health emergency began, immigrant nurses and doctors are essential to our health care system and are critical to our fight against COVID-19. This legislation recognizes their role and their important service to the country as we confront this public health crisis. We urge you to support this bipartisan legislation and include it in forthcoming COVID-19 relief legislation.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of International Healthcare Recruitment
American Business Immigration Coalition
American College of Physicians
American College of Rheumatology
American Geriatrics Society
American Medical Association
American Society of Hematology
Ascension
Catholic Health Association of the U.S.
Healthcare Leadership Council
The Jewish Federations of North America
National Kidney Foundation
National Rural Health Association
Physicians for American Healthcare Access
Society of Critical Care Medicine
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Hospital Medicine