

May 26, 2020

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
United States Senate
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
United States Senate
357 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tim Kaine
United States Senate
231 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mark Warner
United States Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Alexander, Blackburn, Kaine and Warner:

Even before the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, many hospitals in both rural Tennessee and Virginia were focused on the challenge of growing and sustaining a strong healthcare workforce. As you are all aware, our entire country – not just our states – is experiencing a healthcare workforce shortage. That is why, on behalf of Ballad Health, I am writing to request that you support the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (the Act).

The bi-partisan act, introduced by Sens. Perdue (R-GA), Young (R-IN), Durbin (D-IL) and Coons (D-DE), will help ensure thousands of separately foreign-born nurses and doctors who want to practice in the United States are given the opportunity to do so. The Act will authorize the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to recapture up to 25,000 immigrant visas for nurses and 15,000 immigrant visas for physicians. The

Act would also allow USCIS to recapture immigrant visas for the families of these medical professionals.

It is important to note that the Act would not create more visas; rather, it would simply reallocate a limited number of unused visas from prior years for doctors and nurses now.

The Act also puts many safeguards in place. For instance, in order for employers to hire individuals with these visas, they must attest that the healthcare worker they are hiring who receives one of the visas will not displace an American worker. The Act also ensures these medical professionals meet high standards of equivalent education, state licensure and English fluency, and they must have clean disciplinary records.

One-sixth of our nation's healthcare workforce is foreign-born. More importantly, many of these healthcare workers, including doctors and nurses, are the predominant caregivers in rural and other underserved communities, which are settings where access to healthcare continues to be a challenge. There is no doubt foreign-born healthcare workers are indispensable to Tennessee and Virginia's healthcare systems, especially while we fight a pandemic. Ballad Health's hospitals would benefit greatly from the Act because it will give them a larger pool of healthcare workers to recruit and retain from for their communities.

We urge you to support the Act, so our hospitals can have a strong and sustainable pipeline of talent that will help them fight this pandemic now and serve their communities into the future, and we hope to work with you to advance this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alan Levine
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Ballad Health

Clay Runnels, MD
Chief Physician Executive
Ballad Health

Amit Vashist, MD
Chief Clinical Officer
Ballad Health

Mark Patterson, MD
President
Ballad Health Medical Associates