



OKLAHOMA STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



GEORGE W. MONKS, MD  
PRESIDENT

LARRY A. BOOKMAN, MD  
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

MARY S. CLARKE, MD  
PRESIDENT-ELECT

DAVID L. HOLDEN, MD  
VICE PRESIDENT

MARK F. KOWALSKI, MD  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

JULIE STREBEL HAGER, MD  
SPEAKER  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

GEOFFREY S. CHOW, MD  
VICE-SPEAKER  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

PETER P. ARAN, MD  
CHAIR  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

DANIEL J. JOYCE, DO  
VICE-CHAIR  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

WES GLINSMANN, CAE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

May 20, 2020

Senator James Lankford  
316 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lankford:

On behalf of the Oklahoma State Medical Association and its nearly 4,000 physician and medical student members, I am writing to urge your support for policies to help address the nation's physician shortage and improve access to care by expanding the availability of international medical graduates (IMGs) to practice in rural and underserved areas.

Specifically, we respectfully urge you to sign on as a cosponsor of **S. 948, the "Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act."** OSMA has long supported expansion of the Conrad 30 program, which allows foreign physicians who complete a US residency to remain in practice in an underserved area for up to three years, rather than being forced to return to their home country and wait two years before applying for another visa. Conrad 30 reform was a priority even before the COVID-19 pandemic, and we believe that this legislation is still very important to support rural health care in our state. All five members of Oklahoma's House delegation have signed on as cosponsors of the House version of this legislation (H.R. 2895), and we urge you to follow suit on S. 948.

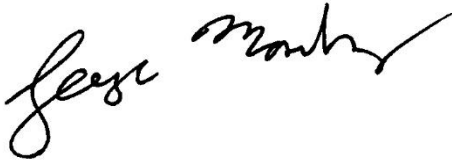
During the current crisis, however, we are additionally asking for your support of the **Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (S. 3599/H.R. 6788)**. This bipartisan legislation would recapture 15,000 unused immigrant visas for physicians to strengthen the healthcare workforce and ensure patient access to care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. was already facing a serious shortage of physicians, due largely to the growth and aging of the population. The COVID crisis served to highlight this physician shortage, as many states were forced to amend state licensing laws, expand physicians' practice areas and recall retired physicians. This increased demand will only continue to grow, leaving the nation with a projected shortfall of more than 120,000 physicians by 2032. Increasing the number of visas available to international medical graduates (IMGs) is vital to addressing not just the COVID-19 crisis but the larger shortage of physicians in the system.

Access to care in rural and underserved areas was a growing problem before we'd ever heard of COVID-19. While none of these measures are silver bullets to address the nation's physician shortage, they are solid steps in the right direction toward making sure patients have access to a well-trained physician in their communities.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Monks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

George Monks, MD  
President  
Oklahoma State Medical Association