



**American Society for
Gastrointestinal Endoscopy**

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The Honorable David Perdue
U.S. Senate
455 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Cornyn
U.S. Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons
U.S. Senate
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The Honorable Todd Young
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185 Dirksen Senate Office Building
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The Honorable Dick Durbin
U.S. Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senate
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) offers support of the “Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act” (S. 3599) and advocates for its inclusion in the next COVID-19 stimulus legislation.

According to new data published by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), the United States could experience an estimated shortage of between 54,100 and 139,000 physicians, including shortfalls in both primary and specialty care, by 2033.¹ An aging population coupled with 2 in 5 physicians nearing the traditional retirement age will also have implications on whether the number of physicians will be adequate to meet future demand.

International Medical Graduates (IMGs) constitute roughly a quarter of the U.S. physician workforce. They have served on the frontlines during the COVID-19 pandemic and have historically filled gaps in rural and medically underserved communities. The contributions of IMGs to health care delivery and to improving access to care for our most disadvantaged populations, must be recognized and supported, not overlooked. Your legislation is an important step toward bolstering our country’s physician workforce by recapturing up to 15,000 unused employment-based immigrant visas for physicians who are eligible to practice in the United States or who are already in the country on temporary work visas.

ASGE also supports reauthorization of the Conrad 30 J-1 visa waiver. The J-1 visa requires that a recipient return to their home country for at least two years at the

¹ The Complexities of Physician Supply and Demand: Projections From 2018 to 2033. June 2020; Association of American Medical Colleges.
<https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2020-06/stratcomm-aamc-physician-workforce-projections-june-2020.pdf>

conclusion of training unless a waiver is obtained. The Conrad 30 waiver allows IMGs to remain in the United States for an additional three years if they provide health care for rural and urban medically underserved populations.

Lastly, ASGE strongly urges you to respond to the president's *Proclamation Suspending Entry of Aliens Who Present a Risk to the U.S. Labor Market Following the Coronavirus Outbreak*, issued on June 22, 2020. Specifically, ASGE and other medical societies are seeking clarity from the administration that all health care professionals (e.g., physicians, medical residents and fellows, medical researchers, and those working in non-clinical settings) and their dependents—not only those who are involved in COVID-19 research and practice—be recognized as critical to our national interest, and therefore exempt from the proclamation. We request your assistance in this regard.

ASGE is grateful for your leadership to ensure our nation's health care workforce needs are immediately met during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Should you require additional information, or if I can be of assistance to you on this or other health care-related matters, please contact Camille Bonta, ASGE policy consultant, at (202) 320-3658 or cbonta@summithealthconsulting.com

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Klaus Mergener', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Klaus Mergener, MD, PhD, MBA, FASGE
President
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy