



August 31, 2020

The Honorable Kamala Harris
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support of the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act – S. 3599

Dear Senator Harris:

Community Medical Centers (CMC) respectfully writes to ask your support of S. 3599, The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act. In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to ensure adequate healthcare provider availability in our nation's healthcare system. Immigrant physicians are a critical part of providing quality healthcare, particularly in rural and underserved areas of the United States.

As you know, Community Medical Centers' (CMC) healthcare system is the largest healthcare provider in the central San Joaquin Valley. This includes Community Regional Medical Center (CRMC) – located in Fresno and the flagship facility of Community Medical Centers – which is one of the state's largest safety-net hospitals with one of the highest volumes for Medi-Cal inpatient discharges in California. CRMC is the region's only comprehensive burn and Level 1 Trauma Center between Sacramento and Los Angeles.

In addition, our region's physician-per-capita ratio is low — about 39 primary care physicians per 100,000 people, versus 64 primary care physicians per 100,000 in the San Francisco Bay Area and 50 per 100,000 for California overall.

The limits on H-1B visas and backlogs in the program create a particular challenge for CMC. Currently, 29% of the hospitalists practicing at CMC are on H-1B temporary non-immigrant visas waiting for approval to become permanent residents. Since permanent resident visas are capped annually, the temporary visas must be extended on a regular basis to allow these professionals to continue practicing. In addition, many are also impacted by the per country visa limitations, making the waiting period for green cards stretch into decades. The uncertainty this causes for our valued medical professionals has significant impact and exacts a toll on them and their families. We rely on their services and should recognize their long-term contributions to our country.

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One of our own practicing hospitalists, Dr. Amtinder Batth, has a compelling story of waiting several years to receive his citizenship. As an integral physician within CMC and an upstanding citizen, he has planted roots in the Fresno area where he is raising his family. As he patiently waits for solutions to this issue, it is unreasonable for him to live under a veil of uncertainty regarding his H-1B visa status.

It is because of these reasons, and as a hospital that is impacted by the backlog of visas for foreign medical professionals, we request your support of S. 3599.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig S. Castro". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Craig S. Castro
President & Chief Executive Officer

cc: Dr. Amtinder Batth