



August 4, 2020

The Honorable Joshua S. Gottheimer
United States House of Representatives
213 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Gottheimer:

On behalf of the New Jersey Hospital Association (NJHA) and its more than 400 member hospitals and health centers, I write to you today to express support for the *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act* (H.R. 6788/S. 3599). The legislation, which was recently introduced in the House by Reps. Brad Schneider (D-IL) and Tom Cole (R-OK) and in the Senate by Sens. David Perdue (R-GA) and Dick Durbin (D-IL), would enhance the healthcare workforce during the COVID-19 global pandemic by recapturing 40,000 unused immigrant visas for doctors and nurses.

The *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act*, if enacted, would temporarily allow international physicians and nurses who are willing and able to fill healthcare staffing shortages access to unused immigrant visas and would cut their wait to permanently work in the United States down years, if not decades.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), 32.7 percent of active physicians in New Jersey are over the age of 60 – the third highest percentage nationally.¹ On the other side of the age spectrum, only 13.3 percent of New Jersey physicians are under 40, the 5th lowest percentage in the nation. New Jersey also lags behind our neighbors in resident physicians per 100,000 population. Among accredited allopathic programs, New Jersey's 32.2 residents per 100,000 population ranks significantly behind New York (81.5) and Pennsylvania (61.6). To maintain current rates of utilization, New Jersey will need an additional 1,116 primary care physicians by 2030, a 17 percent increase compared to the state's current (as of 2010) 6,236 PCP workforce.²

¹ Association of American Medical Colleges. (2015, November). *2015 State Physician Workforce Data Book*.

² Petterson, Stephen M; Cai, Angela; Moore, Miranda; Bazemore, Andrew. (2013, September) *State-level projections of primary care workforce, 2010-2030*. Robert Graham Center, Washington, D.C.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has exacerbated New Jersey's already considerable healthcare workforce shortage. Faced with the possibility of contracting the life-threatening disease, many of our state's late-career physicians and nurses have chosen to retire early rather than risk their own health. These clinicians have decades of experience, knowledge, and decision-making skills that are crucially important to guide the wise use of scarce resources when treating patients, protecting coworkers, and ensuring the capabilities of healthcare delivery organizations. While the decision to retire may be right for them, it could prove deleterious to the workforce as a whole. Early data suggests that even younger practitioners may be leaving the profession as well, as the risk of exposure to coronavirus poses a very real danger to their health and the health of their families.

New Jersey's existing provider shortage, combined with the ongoing and potential loss of clinicians in multiple age groups, creates an urgent need for congressional action to expand the healthcare workforce. The *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act* would be an important first step toward ensuring that our nation's healthcare needs are met by qualified physicians and nurses in a timely manner, benefiting all of us. Immigrant nurses and doctors have long been an integral part of our healthcare system – and during this public health crisis, these highly trained, dedicated health professionals can make a life-saving difference.

On behalf of my colleagues at the New Jersey Hospital Association, as well as the hundreds of New Jersey hospitals and health systems on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic, I urge you to support this important legislation. Thank you again for your continued support New Jersey hospitals and for your tireless efforts on behalf of our state.

Sincerely,



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