



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health
P O BOX 2448
RICHMOND, VA 23218

M. Norman Oliver, MD, MA
State Health Commissioner

TTY 7-1-1 OR
1-800-828-1120

September 24, 2020

Atul Bali, MD, CHS, FASN, FNKF
Physicians for American Healthcare Access
P.O. Box 16542
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122

Dear Dr. Bali:

This is in reply to your email regarding your request for support for State 30 and Physician Access Authorization Act (S. 948/H.R.2895) and the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (S.3599/HR.6788). Thank you for contacting us regarding your request.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Office of Health Equity administers the Conrad 30 Waiver Program for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Commonwealth's participation in the Conrad 30 Waiver Program enables VDH to act on behalf of the Commonwealth and request waivers for eligible J-1 physicians. VDH may act as an interested state agency to request up to 30 J-1 visa waivers per year with two key goals - to increase the availability of medical care in underserved areas and to improve access to primary care in Virginia.

I am writing to share VDH's support for the Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Authorization Act (S. 948/H.R.2895) and the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (S.3599/HR.6788). Improving access to primary health care and needed specialty care in medically underserved areas is an important VDH goal. The Primary Care Needs Assessment in 2016 identified persistent recruiting challenge areas, or areas that are always recruiting providers. The Conrad 30 program directly improves healthcare in these challenge areas by placing physicians in medically underserved areas for three years of service. This program is an essential physician recruitment tool for rural and underserved communities, and expanding this program along with enacting the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act will increase access to healthcare for more Virginians.

The COVID-19 public health emergency has highlighted the vulnerability of our healthcare system and the need for appropriately placed providers. Expanding the ability for foreign-born physicians and nurses to work and serve at a facility in a healthcare shortage area will increase access to care for our most vulnerable populations and improve Virginia's ability to prepare for and respond to pandemics.

Virginia's Conrad 30 Waiver program has been very successful. Virginia has recommended 30 J-1 Visa Waiver Physicians to the Department of State annually for the past three years. This year is no exception; and to date VDH have recommended and processed 30 physicians, with 0 pending and 0 applications on a waitlist.

VDH is committed to assuring that all Virginians have access to quality, affordable health care. The reauthorization of the Conrad 30 legislation will not only allow states to expand beyond 30 slots, which will lessen the burden of the current workforce shortages, but also makes it permanent. Virginia will continue to support the Conrad 30 program and understands that an expansion will better serve rural and underserved communities. VDH will recommend to the Governor's Office that this statement of support be shared with the members of Virginia's Congressional delegation.

Should you have any further questions or concerns regarding the program please feel free to contact Olivette Burroughs, the VDH Statewide Healthcare Workforce Manager at olivette.burroughs@vdh.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M. Norman Oliver MD".

M. Norman Oliver, MD, MA
State Health Commissioner