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May 6, 2021

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The Honorable James Lankford
United States Senate
316 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Lankford:

On behalf of the nearly 4,000 physician and resident members of the Oklahoma State Medical Association, we urge your support for **S. 1024**, the “**Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act**”. International Medical Graduates (IMGs) are an important part of our U.S. health care teams and serve on the medical front lines across the country. Consequently, the ability to recapture 15,000 unused employment-based physician immigrant visas and 25,000 unused employment-based professional nurse immigrant visas from prior fiscal years would help enable our U.S. physicians to have the support they need and our U.S. patients to access the care they deserve during this unprecedented public health crisis.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. was already facing a serious shortage of physicians largely due to the growth and aging of the population and the impending retirements of many physicians. This shortage was dramatically highlighted by the lack of physicians in certain key areas, especially rural and underserved communities, during the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced states to recall retired physicians, expand scope of practice in some cases and amend out of state licensing laws. The heightened demand for physicians will only continue to grow and will soon will outpace supply, leading to a projected shortfall of between 54,100 and 139,000 physicians by 2033. As a result, increasing the number of visas that are available to IMGs is critical to addressing this mounting shortage that has only been exacerbated by the nation’s battle against the current worldwide pandemic.

Moreover, IMGs play a vital role in caring for some of the most vulnerable populations in the U.S. For example, foreign-trained physicians are more likely than U.S.-trained physicians to practice in lower-income and disadvantaged communities. As such, nearly 21 million Americans live in areas of the U.S. where foreign-trained physicians account for at least half of all physicians. Furthermore, over the past 10 years, more than 10,000 J-1 IMGs have worked in underserved communities. By increasing the number of visas available to IMGs these vulnerable populations will be better served and the overall health care system will be bolstered.

The U.S. health care workforce relies upon physicians from other countries to provide high-quality and accessible patient care. As such, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and numerous patients seeking previously postponed elective procedures, it will be more critical than ever to ensure that the U.S. fully utilizes its immigration system to help meet both delayed and ever-expanding statewide and national health care needs. Therefore, to enable 15,000 physicians and 25,000 nurses to join our frontlines as quickly as possible, OSMA encourages your support for S. 1024.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Clarke".

Mary Clarke, MD, President
Oklahoma State Medical Association