

May 3, 2021

The Honorable Ted Cruz
127A Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Ted Cruz,

On behalf of the Texas Academy of Family Physicians, which represents more than 9,300 member physicians, residents and medical students throughout the state, I write to share our organization's support for the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (S. 1024). This legislation is a good, incremental step to address an immediate need presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Family physicians are acutely aware of the current shortage of primary care physicians across the country and the important role International Medical Graduates play in addressing this shortage. Particularly during the COVID-19 crisis, the ability to recapture 15,000 unused employment-based physician immigrant visas from prior fiscal years would enable our U.S. physicians to have the support they need and our U.S. patients to have the care they deserve.

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 IMGs practicing through J-1 visa waivers 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.

It is unacceptable that thousands of doctors currently working in the U.S. on temporary visas are stuck in the green card backlog, putting their futures in jeopardy and limiting their ability to contribute to the fight against COVID-19. This bipartisan, targeted, and timely legislation will strengthen our health care workforce and improve health care access for Americans in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the future.

We are pleased to support this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Amer Shakil, MD, MBA
TAFP President