

Nathan Schlicher, MD, JD, MBA
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May 14, 2021

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Delivered via email

Re: Support for the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act

Dear members of Washington state's congressional delegation,

On behalf of the Washington State Medical Association and our physician and physician assistant members across the state, we are writing to share our continued support of the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (S. 1024 / H.R. 2255) – legislation to increase access to care and promote the ability of International Medical Graduates to practice medicine in our communities. We thank those of you who co-sponsored last year's version of the bill and urge universal support for this year's bill.

International Medical Graduates are vital members of the U.S. physician community, providing quality care to patients – often in underserved communities and to vulnerable populations. The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act allows for the recapturing of up to 15,000 physician immigrant visas that went unused during prior fiscal years. Integrating IMGs to the health care system will help increase access to care for patients and alleviate demand on the existing physician workforce in the U.S. More IMGs means that the U.S. can increase its response efforts and prepare for future demands that may be placed on our health care system.

We all know that the U.S. is facing a severe physician workforce shortage – current projections indicate that there will be a shortfall of up to 140,000 physicians by 2033¹ – and some areas of our state and our

¹ <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/new-aamc-report-confirms-growing-physician-shortage#:~:text=MEDIA%20CONTACTS&text=According%20to%20new%20data%20published.and%20specialty%20care%2C%20by%202033.>

country are particularly medically underserved, which is a contributing factor to health inequities. WSMA continues to support the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act as it is clear that integrating IMGs to our health care system will bolster our workforce and help meet the needs of increasingly diverse patient populations. Increased access to care provided by culturally responsive physicians benefits not only individuals and communities, but will also improve our nation's health disparities, which have been highlighted and exacerbated during the pandemic.

Here in Washington state, as we have navigated surges in COVID-19 patients over the past 15 months, retired physicians have been asked to return to the workforce and out-of-state physicians were called on to travel across state lines to meet the demands placed on the state's health care delivery systems. The pandemic has called attention to the physician workforce shortage we were already facing. Many measures will need to be taken to comprehensively address physician workforce, but empowering IMGs will help build the capacity health care systems need to combat COVID-19 cases and its long-term impacts in the years ahead. We urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued efforts to maintain the health and well-being of our state's residents. If you have questions or if we can be of assistance to your office in any way, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan Schlicher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "S".

Nathan Schlicher, MD, JD, MBA
WSMA President

cc: WSMA Executive Committee
Jennifer Hanscom, Executive Director/CEO
Sean Graham, Director of Government Affairs