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## Reply to

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June 17, 2021

The Honorable Brad Schneider  
United States House of Representatives  
1432 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom O'Halleran  
United States House of Representatives  
324 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
United States House of Representatives  
2207 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Don Bacon  
United States House of Representatives  
1024 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Schneider, Cole, O'Halleran, and Bacon:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I write to express our strong support for the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (H.R. 2255) and urge the House to swiftly pass this legislation. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the vital role International Medical Graduates (IMGs) play in the U.S. health care workforce, and it is essential that Congress act immediately to provide them with durable immigration status to enable them to continue providing needed care to children and adults that will help bring the COVID-19 pandemic to an end and contribute to the health of all Americans moving forward. The time is now to recognize the critical contributions of IMGs to the U.S. health care workforce by facilitating access to much-needed permanent residency.

Physicians and allied health providers are the backbone of the U.S. health care system, translating scientific knowledge into clinical care that cures disease, ensures healthy development, and improves life outcomes. However, there has long been an inadequate supply of physicians to meet need, and pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists are no exception. Workforce shortages and maldistributions limit access to care for children and have significant implications for their long-term health and development. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed dramatic inequities in the health care system. From continued access to lifesaving vaccines to screening for mental health to the care of children with special health care needs, it is clearer than ever before that the U.S. needs robust systems of care for children and families, and we must act now to bolster the health care workforce.

International Medical Graduates have long played an important role in addressing the need for additional health care providers, comprising roughly a quarter of the U.S. physician workforce. While some IMGs are U.S. citizens educated abroad, many IMGs are foreign nationals practicing in the United States on nonimmigrant work visas. Indeed, foreign national physicians are more likely than U.S. citizen physicians to work in underserved areas, providing needed care to communities that lack it, thanks in large part to policies that provide access to work permits in exchange for practicing in these areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the challenges faced by foreign national IMGs that must be addressed so they are able to provide care to children and families in the long-term,

including in future pandemics. Visa restrictions that specify worksites have prevented IMGs from being redeployed to meet need, whether to provide care in COVID-19 hotspots at the height of the pandemic or to assist in the current mass COVID-19 vaccination campaign that is rolling out for adolescents ages 12 and up. These restrictions have left physicians on the sidelines when they are needed most. Additionally, foreign national physicians whose immigration status, and often that of their families, is tied to their continued employment have faced the threat of deportation if they experienced a long-term disabling illness or death resulting from COVID-19, which was especially the case before the widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines. During a time of enormous strain on physicians, foreign national IMGs providing desperately needed care faced this additional uncertainty, an injustice that must be remedied.

The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act will provide a long-term solution to these concerns for foreign national IMGs who have played a critical role in providing care during the pandemic. By recapturing 15,000 unused employment-based immigrant visas from prior years for physicians, this legislation will provide a fast track to permanent residency for IMGs who play a vital role in providing care to our communities. Permanent residency status will ensure that foreign national pediatricians and their colleagues in other medical specialties can meet urgent health care needs during this public health emergency without fear that their legal status in the U.S. is in jeopardy. Quick enactment of this legislation is not only a necessary policy to strengthen the U.S. health care workforce—it is a matter of fairness for the immigrant physicians who have come from all over the world to provide needed care for Americans.

Thank you for your work to advance this important workforce policy. If we can be of further assistance, please contact James Baumberger in the AAP Washington Office at [jbaumberger@aap.org](mailto:jbaumberger@aap.org) or 202-347-8600.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Savio Beers', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Lee Savio Beers, MD, FAAP  
President