



June 03, 2021

The Honorable Deb Fischer  
United States Senate  
454 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Sasse  
United States Senate  
107 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (S.1024) endorsement.**

Dear Senators Fischer and Sasse:

On behalf of the Nebraska Rural Health Association (NERHA), I encourage you to support the Workforce Resilience Act (S.1024), a bipartisan bill currently in Congress. This bill would alleviate visa-based restrictions for international nurses and physicians who have trained in the United States, allowing these highly educated professionals to join the ongoing efforts of improving access to care in rural communities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The bill aims to strengthen and reinforce rural healthcare in the State of Nebraska and across the country by:

- recapturing unused visas from previous fiscal years for doctors, nurses, and their families previously authorized by Congress
- exempting qualified applicants from county caps
- requiring the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department to expedite visa processing
- limiting the filing period for recaptured visas to 90 days following termination of the President's COVID-19 emergency declaration
- requiring employers to attest that immigrant physicians and nurses who receive these visas will not displace American workers

Health care workforce shortages that have plagued rural communities for decades have become exacerbated by the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, 77 percent of rural counties were designated Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). While approximately 20 percent of the nation's population lives in rural areas, only 9 percent of US physicians practice in rural America.

Overall, international medical and nursing graduates account for nearly 25% of the physicians and 8% of nurses actively practicing in the USA. These international healthcare professionals are more likely to practice in rural and underserved areas - the exact locations where they are desperately needed to continue efforts to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus and assure a healthy and prosperous recovery period from the pandemic.

The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (S.1024) would allow tens of thousands of physicians and nurses to join the ongoing efforts to combat and address the significant health care workforce shortages in rural America. Allowing greater numbers of internationally trained physicians and nurses will improve access to high-quality health care services in rural communities and allow our rural healthcare organizations to better combat the current pandemic and future health crises more effectively, ultimately saving lives.

NERHA strongly supports the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act, and we applaud the bipartisan effort to improve healthcare delivery through S.1024. We urge you to co-sponsor the bill, thereby protecting rural health by bolstering our workforce in these challenging times while striving to improve rural healthcare access for the future.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. We would be grateful for your support for these crucial legislative efforts and for becoming stalwart champions for rural America.

Respectfully Yours,



Jed R. Hansen, PhD, RN  
Executive Director  
Nebraska Rural Health Association