



May 12, 2020

The Honorable David Perdue  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Young  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Coons  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Cornyn  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Perdue, Durbin, Young, Coons, Cornyn, and Leahy:

During this global pandemic, the role of International Medical Graduates (IMGs) in augmenting the physician workforce is especially critical to the care of the thousands of patients battling COVID-19. That is a compelling reason why the American College of Physicians (ACP) is pleased to take this opportunity to express its strong support for the bipartisan Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act, S. 3599, introduced by Senators David Perdue, Richard Durbin, Todd Young, Christopher Coons, John Cornyn, and Patrick Leahy. This innovative legislation would authorize immigrant visas for health care clinicians, including up to 15,000 for physicians who are eligible to practice in the United States or are already in the country on temporary work visas. The visas would provide a pathway to employment-based green cards and, in doing so, it would quickly address one of the health care system's most pressing needs.

ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 159,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Internal medicine specialists treat many of the patients at greatest risk from COVID-19, including the elderly and patients with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart disease and asthma.

By recapturing a limited number of unused visas from prior years and allocating them to doctors and nurses, the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act offers the advantage of not only addressing the physician shortage that existed before the pandemic but recognizing that the shortages are growing more severe as the need for caregivers becomes greater with each passing day. It is an extremely timely response to the risk imposed by COVID-19.

ACP urges Congress to pass S. 3599 as part of any additional COVID-19 legislative stimulus package. By taking such action, Congress would go a long way toward assuring the nation's health care workforce needs are met. The legislation would accomplish this by addressing joint workforce needs that have grown all the more critical, not only as a consequence of the increased number of physicians required to treat COVID-19 patients, but also those necessary to stand in for the physicians who have unfortunately contracted COVID-19 themselves and are unable to continue to serve in the workforce.

In conclusion, the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act, S. 3599, is a smart, bipartisan approach to the physician and nursing workforce shortage – both long and short term - that draws on an untapped resource. It would help save countless lives in these unprecedented times. ACP strongly supports this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqueline W. Fincher MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, MACP  
President