

Subject: DURBIN, PERDUE, YOUNG, COONS TO INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN BILL ADDRESSING SHORTAGE OF DOCTORS, NURSES

Date: Friday, May 1, 2020 at 10:34:10 AM Eastern Daylight Time

From:

To:

Attachments: image001.png



For Immediate Release
April 30, 2020
Contact: Emily Hampsten
202-228-5643

DURBIN, PERDUE, YOUNG, COONS TO INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN BILL ADDRESSING SHORTAGE OF DOCTORS, NURSES

Lead Senate effort to strengthen health care workforce

SPRINGFIELD – U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee, along with Senators David Perdue (R-GA), Todd Young (R-IN), and Chris Coons (D-DE) today announced they will introduce bipartisan legislation, the *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act*, to provide a temporary stopgap to quickly address our nation’s shortage of doctors and nurses, which poses a significant risk to our ability to effectively respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

The Senators’ proposal, to be introduced when the Senate reconvenes, would recapture 25,000 unused immigrant visas for nurses and 15,000 unused immigrant visas for doctors that Congress has previously authorized and allocate those visas to doctors and nurses who can help in the fight against COVID-19.

“Consider this: one-sixth of our health care workforce is foreign-born. Immigrant nurses and doctors play a vital role in our health care system, and their contributions are now more crucial than ever. Where would we be in this pandemic without them? 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,” said Durbin. **“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. I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support these vital health care workers.”**

“The growing shortage of doctors and nurses over the past decade has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis,” said Perdue. **“Fortunately, there are thousands of trained health professionals who want to practice in the United States. This proposal would simply reallocate a limited number of unused visas from prior years for doctors and nurses who are qualified to help in our**

fight against COVID-19. This shortage is critical and needs immediate attention so that our healthcare facilities are not overwhelmed in this crisis.”

Specifically, the Senators’ proposal:

- Recaptures unused visas from previous fiscal years for doctors, nurses, and their families
- Exempts these visas from country caps
- Requires employers to attest that immigrants from overseas who receive these visas will not displace an American worker
- Requires the Department of Homeland Security and State Department to expedite the processing of recaptured visas
- Limits the filing period for recaptured visas to 90 days following the termination of the President’s COVID-19 emergency declaration

The *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act* is endorsed by the following organizations: Illinois Health and Hospital Association, American Hospital Association, American Organization for Nursing Leadership, Physicians for American Healthcare Access, American Immigration Lawyers Association, FWD.us, and National Immigration Forum.

“IHA strongly supports this legislation and applauds Sen. Durbin's commitment to ensuring all Illinoisans have access to healthcare, especially as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said A.J. Wilhelmi, President & CEO of the Illinois Health and Hospital Association. **“Illinois faces a critical shortage of nurses and physicians. As our healthcare heroes work around the clock to respond to the pandemic, IHA urges Congress to pass this legislation to deliver help to the frontlines. By relieving the backlog of immigrant visas for physicians and professional nurses, this legislation will expand access to care, especially in rural and underserved communities.”**

There has never been a more urgent need for the care that foreign-born physicians and foreign-trained nurses provide than during the current COVID-19 pandemic. These professionals play a critical role in ensuring the health of our communities and they are required to meet rigid standards of equivalent education, English fluency and state licensure, and must have clean disciplinary records,” the American Hospital Association and the American Organization for Nursing Leadership said. **“A targeted allocation of recaptured visas to these health care professionals will have a tremendous impact on the ability to care for patients with COVID-19 and it will have a lasting impact on the overall health of our communities. Without your legislation, foreign-trained nurses will not be able to quickly enter the United States since the visa category for these professionals is currently exhausted. The physicians provided assistance will gain flexibility in work assignment and will be better able to lend their skills where they are most needed.**

“Physicians for American Healthcare Access (PAHA) welcomes, appreciates and applauds Sen. Durbin, Sen. Coons, Sen. Perdue and Sen. Young's bipartisan initiative to address the nation’s Physician and Nurse workforce in the COVID-19 crisis. The bill identifies an untapped resource in the immigrant physicians that are trained the US, experienced and in the frontlines. This bill provides permanent residency and allows the immigrant physicians to fully respond to the pandemic without restrictions of work site authorization and protects their families from deportation in the eventuality of disability or death while fighting for their communities. One in four physicians are immigrants and they are the pillars of medical access in underserved areas. This is a long overdue first step to streamline physician immigration to stabilize and improve health care access in America. The shortage of nurses in the frontlines would also be addressed by

this bill. PAHA supports and endorses the bill,” said Physicians for American Healthcare Access.

“AILA welcomes this bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Perdue, Durbin, Young and Coons; the bill would help address the critical healthcare shortage in the United States, a weakness that has been evident during the COVID-19 national emergency. International physicians and nurses who are willing and able to fill health care staffing shortages often have to wait years, if not decades, before they can permanently work in the United States. The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act would be an important first step toward ensuring that our nation’s health care needs are met by qualified physicians and nurses in a timely manner, benefiting all of us,” said American Immigration Lawyers Association.

“Ensuring that doctors and nurses can have their permanent residency expedited through our immigration system is a smart bipartisan approach that will help save countless lives in the midst of this public health emergency. We commend Senators Perdue, Durbin, Young and Coons for working across party lines on this vital legislation. Americans need Congress to continue to enact immigration policies that strengthen our workforce and protect legal immigration channels. Immigrants and immigration are essential not only to our nation's ability to respond to this urgent health crisis, but to rebuild our economy and create jobs out of this economic crisis,” said FWD.us President Todd Schulte.

“The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act recognizes the value of immigrants and immigration to the nation by letting in more immigrant doctors and nurses and their families. This bill addresses a workforce need and honors family unity. Particularly at this time, addressing shortages in the health care workforce is imperative. By ensuring unused visas do not go to waste, the bill will help doctors and nurses and their families, who have been waiting in line, immigrate sooner,” said National Immigration Forum.

Full text of the bill is available [here](#). A summary of the legislation is available [here](#). A section-by-section of the legislation is available [here](#).