



**American Hospital
Association**

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August 6, 2010

The Honorable Henry Cuellar
United States House of Representatives
336 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cuellar:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA), our more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems, and other health care organizations, and our 40,000 individual members, I am writing to offer our support for your bill, H.R. 5687, the *Underserved Area Nursing Relief Restoration Act of 2010*.

This measure will help ensure access to health care by reauthorizing and extending a limited three year temporary visa program for nurses – the H-1C visa program that expired last year.

Until 1995, temporary visa programs existed to help address episodic nursing shortages. In 1999, Congress created the temporary H-1C visa program, a narrowly crafted measure to enable certain health care facilities in underserved communities to recruit critically needed nurses. Under the program, 500 internationally educated nurses per year may enter the country to work in designated hospitals for a period of three years. The program expired in 2009 and unless Congress acts, nurses currently holding H-1C visas who are working in U.S. hospitals will be forced to return to their own countries.

Our nation is experiencing a critical shortage of nurses which threatens hospitals' fundamental promise of being able to care for their communities by operating at full capacity. The shortage is even more critical in those hospitals located in rural or remote areas, or that provide service in underserved areas. As our nation moves towards implementing health care reform, the demand for registered nurses will continue to rise. The expiration of the H-1C program will only exacerbate the shortage and may curtail the ability of hospitals currently employing these nurses to provide quality health care to their communities.

We applaud you for addressing this issue in your legislation and look forward to working with you to see this important legislation become law.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

