

July 26, 2019

The Honorable Rand Paul
United States Senate
167 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Paul:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, our clinician partners – including more than 270,000 affiliated physicians, 2 million nurses, including 9,800 nurse leaders and other caregivers – and the 43,000 health care leaders who belong to our professional membership groups, the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) is writing to strongly support the Backlog Elimination, Legal Immigration, and Employment Visa Enhancement Act, S. 2091.

Currently, there is greater demand for new nurses than there are students graduating from nursing programs in the United States. That is why America's hospitals and health systems partially rely on immigrant nurses from a number of countries as a small, but absolutely necessary, part of the health care labor market. These nurses are required to meet rigid standards of equivalent education, English fluency and state licensure, and must have clean disciplinary records. Foreign-trained nurses do not displace American workers; in fact, the demand for nurses continues to grow. Foreign-trained nurses make up less than 10% of the 160,000 new nurses licensed each year. They are recruited primarily to rural and inner-city hospitals, locations that find it more difficult than others to recruit nurses domestically. Foreign-trained nurses serve a critical role in providing care to patients in these underserved communities.

Your legislation would increase the total number of employment-based visas from 140,000 to 270,000. An increase in the number of employment-based visas is necessary to decrease the backlog of foreign-trained workers in all employment sectors who are currently working in the United States but have entered through a temporary visa. In addition, your legislation ensures that critical health care workers needed in the United States would have access to employment-based visas by carving out health care workers in designated shortage occupations from the limit. This ensures that hospitals and health systems can continue to provide care to their communities.

We thank you for your understanding of the critical care foreign-trained health care workers provide to Americans across the country and look forward to working with you to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

/s/

Thomas Nickels
Executive Vice President
American Hospital Association

Robyn Begley
Chief Executive Officer, AONL
Senior Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer, AHA