

Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act – Summary (Sponsored by Senators Perdue, Durbin, Young, and Coons)

Senators Perdue, Durbin, Young, and Coons are sponsoring the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act. This bipartisan, targeted and timely legislation will strengthen the healthcare workforce and improve healthcare access for Americans during the COVID-19 crisis.

One-sixth of our healthcare workforce is foreign-born. Immigrant nurses and doctors play a vital role in our healthcare system, especially in medically-underserved areas of our country.

There are currently thousands of nurses who are stuck overseas due to the green card backlogs and bureaucratic delays, even though they are working to gain approval or have already been approved to come to the United States as lawful permanent residents.

Additionally, there are thousands of doctors who are currently working in our country on temporary visas with approved immigrant petitions and are stuck in the green card backlog. While they are already serving our communities, these doctors face many limitations due to their temporary status, such as not being able to take a shift at a second hospital where they may be desperately needed to assist with treating COVID-19 patients.

The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act allows the entry of nurses with approved immigrant visas and allows physicians with approved immigrant petitions to adjust their status, so that they can help our nation fight the coronavirus and have a durable immigration status.

Under the bill, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) would “recapture” up to 25,000 immigrant visas for nurses and 15,000 immigrant visas for physicians. USCIS would also recapture immigrant visas for the families of these medical professionals.

These recaptured visas would be drawn from the pool of unused employment-based visas that Congress has previously authorized. These visas would be issued in order of priority date and would not be subject to the country caps. To facilitate timely action, premium processing would be applied to qualifying petitions and applications.

All immigrant medical professionals receiving consideration under this bill would be required to meet licensing requirements, pay required filing fees, and clear rigorous national security and criminal history background checks before they can receive recaptured green cards.

Employers of immigrant medical professionals who receive consideration under this bill and who would arrive from overseas will be required to attest that the immigrant medical professional has not displaced and will not displace a United States worker.