

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 6, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chair Leahy, and Ranking Member Shelby:

As you finalize the text of the omnibus appropriations package, we urge you to include the bipartisan *Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act* in any end-of-the-year package.

The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates that in the next twelve years there will be a national shortage of as many as 124,000 physicians.¹ We know that rural communities will be hit hard by these shortages. Americans living in rural communities are seven times as likely as those in urban areas to report that they are unable to get the health care they need,² and only 2% of students in their final year of medical school say they want to live in towns with populations under 25,000.³

For nearly 30 years, the Conrad 30 program has helped to address these shortages by bringing thousands of American-trained physicians from other countries to medically underserved communities. It does so by allowing foreign doctors on J-1 visas to remain in the United States after they finish their medical training if they agree to spend three years practicing in an underserved area.⁴ To date, the program has brought more than 15,000 physicians to underserved

¹ Press Release, Ass'n Am. Med. Colls., AAMC Report Reinforces Mounting Physician Shortage (June 11, 2021), <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/aamc-report-reinforces-mounting-physician-shortage>.

² Kyle Leggot, M.D., *Let's Fix Rural Americans' Inadequate Access to Care*, Am. Acad. Family Physicians (last visited Dec. 5, 2022), <https://www.aafp.org/news/blogs/freshperspectives/entry/20191030fp-ruraltraining.html>.

³ Kirk Siegler, *The Struggle to Hire and Keep Doctors in Rural Areas Means Patients Go Without Care*, NPR (May 21, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/05/21/725118232/the-struggle-to-hire-and-keep-doctors-in-rural-areas-means-patients-go-without-c>.

⁴ See *Conrad 30 Waiver Program*, U.S. Citizenship and Immigr. Servs., [https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/conrad-30-waiver-program#:~:text=The%20Conrad%2030%20waiver%20program,Immigration%20Nationality%20Act%20\(INA\)](https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/conrad-30-waiver-program#:~:text=The%20Conrad%2030%20waiver%20program,Immigration%20Nationality%20Act%20(INA)).

areas in need of doctors,⁵ and in the most recent year that we have complete data for, more than half of the states filled their 30 allotted slots.⁶

Despite the success of the program, Congress has not been able to pass a bill reauthorizing the program for more than six years. For years, the authorization for the program has been extended annually through the appropriations process.⁷ Without a long-term reauthorization, doctors and hospitals have been repeatedly left in limbo, uncertain whether this vital program will continue.

The *Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act*, S. 1810, would end that uncertainty. Our bipartisan bill—which has 26 bipartisan cosponsors, including 13 Democrats and 13 Republicans—would reauthorize and update the program, including by allowing the program to expand to meet demand.

Because the program’s authorization is once again set to lapse at the end of the year, we urge you to ensure that the program is finally reauthorized by including the bipartisan *Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act* in any end-of-year package. Doing so will help ensure that rural and underserved communities continue to benefit from the talents and expertise of foreign physicians who are eager to serve where they are needed most.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

⁵ Dave Muoio, *63 Healthcare Orgs call on Congress to Extend, Expand Visa Waiver For International Medical Graduates*, FIERCE HEALTHCARE (Aug. 3, 2022), <https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/providers/63-healthcare-orgs-call-congress-extend-expand-visa-waiver-international-medical>.

⁶ *Conrad 30 State Totals from FY 2001 through FY 2020*, available at <https://www.3rnet.org/Portals/0/adam/Basic%20Content/QxXpO-cnfkeKBY1XymXi7Q/Content/Conrad%20Historic%20Totals%20-%202001%20to%20Present.pdf> (last visited Dec. 5, 2022).

⁷ See e.g., Katie O’Connor, *Congress Passes Spending Bill, Extends Telehealth Flexibilities*, PSYCHIATRIC NEWS (Apr. 23, 2022), <https://psychnews.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.pn.2022.05.5.18>.