



Short-Term Fix to Bolster the Healthcare Workforce: Recapturing Unused Visas

On behalf of Americans for Prosperity, The LIBRE initiative, and the millions of activists we represent, we applaud the bipartisan efforts from lawmakers in the Senate, and we urge lawmakers from both chambers to advance the **Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act** and enact it into law.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed a tragic reality: decades of misguided public policies have created an ongoing shortage of medical professionals and have restricted health care professionals, including those who come from abroad, from strengthening our healthcare workforce.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. healthcare workforce was already being strained, facing critical shortages of healthcare practitioners across the country. Recent analysis from New American Economy found that, in 2018, there were an average of 27 open healthcare practitioner jobs in the U.S. for every 1 available and unemployed healthcare practitioner – with some states facing larger ratios of open healthcare practitioner jobs to unemployed healthcare practitioners, such as: Arizona (35:1), Georgia (37:1), Ohio (33:1), and Virginia (33:1).¹

While policymakers have recently taken steps toward removing many harmful restrictions, there is much more that should be done to help enable doctors, nurses, and innovators to save more lives. Policy makers should be taking steps toward removing harmful restrictions that limit the ability of health experts and innovators to slow the spread of this disease or provide life-saving medical treatment.

Thanks to a bipartisan group of Senators – David Perdue (R-GA), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Todd Young (R-IN), and Chris Coons (D-DE) – the **Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act** responds to this crisis by recapturing unused visas from previous years, with expedited visa processing, for 40,000 nurses and physicians.²

BACKGROUND

Each year, we see a number of allocated visas go unused as a result of an outdated immigration system and bureaucratic inefficiencies. In previous years, Congress has passed legislation to recapture unused visas and use them for emergency purposes, like the admission of nurses (2005).

The bipartisan **Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act** provides a solution that:

- Recaptures unused visas from previous fiscal years and reallocated them for doctors, nurses, and their families
- Exempts these visas from per-country caps
- Requires the Department of Homeland Security and State Department to expedite the processing of these recaptured visas
- Limits the filing period for recaptured visas to 90 days following the termination of the President's COVID-19 emergency declaration

¹ <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/covid-19-immigrant-healthcare-workers/>

² <https://www.perdue.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Healthcare%20Workforce%20Resilience%20Act.pdf>