



Maryland
Hospital Association

May 25, 2023



The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Andy Harris
1536 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dutch Ruppersberger
2206 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Sarbanes
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Glenn F. Ivey
1529 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
1705 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Trone
2404 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kweisi Mfume
2263 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
2242 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of the Maryland Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's 60 member hospitals and health systems and the Maryland Nurses Association, we request your assistance to address the cap on visas granted by the State Department for internationally educated nurses.

As you may be aware, the U.S. State Department released a [bulletin](#) stating that only visa applications received by June 1, 2022 will be processed. This cap, which affects foreign nurses, will cripple the pipeline of nurses hired by Maryland hospitals to care for their communities. Those who applied after this date will have to go back in line when the quota resets in October, creating further backlogs.

Registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and nursing assistants make up 40% of the hospital workforce.¹ MHA's most recent quarterly data show a total vacancy rate of 17%. For licensed practical nurses and registered nurses, the vacancy rate is over 20% in most regions of the state.

¹ MHA Workforce Survey – April 2023

A [Congressional Research Service report](#) released April 28, outlines several options to ease legislatively imposed barriers (see pgs. 20-24). In the past, the American Hospital Association advocated for the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act, which focused on recapturing unused visas for physicians and nurses. Additionally, the Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act was reintroduced this year to extend the Conrad State 30 Program for three years. This program allows states to request J-1 visa waivers for foreign physicians to work in federally designated shortage and underserved areas. We implore you to consider legislation to remove or adjust visa caps or find ways to utilize unused visas.

Maryland hospitals rely on internationally educated nurses to support the health care workforce. One hospital system hired more than 400 international nurses this year, with 65 expected to work in a single community hospital. Recruiting internationally is time consuming and costly but necessary to address the severe workforce shortage. Additionally, these nurses bring valuable skills and experience to the communities they serve.

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore on April 24 signed into [law](#) a bill to create a pathway to licensure for internationally educated nurses. The law removes a significant barrier—the requirement to have a Social Security number to apply for a license. Now, internationally educated nurses can obtain their initial U.S. nursing license from Maryland instead of going to another state. This change will lower expenses incurred by these nurses and decrease the time they spend waiting to deliver care at the bedside.

We need your support at this critical juncture. We need highly trained nurses to support Maryland's health care workforce. Despite making some progress, the federal cap on visas effectively worsens the hospital workforce crisis in Maryland. Without the ability to recruit and hire international nurses, our hospitals will continue to struggle with high vacancy rates, which impacts access to care and the long-term retention of health care workers.

Thank you for your time and attention to this request. If we can provide additional data or answer any questions, please contact Jane Krienke, jkrienke@mhaonline.org or Robyn Elliott relliott@policypartners.net.

Respectfully,



Brian Frazee
Vice President
Government Affairs
Maryland Hospital Association



Dr. Christie Simon-Waterman
President
Maryland Nurses Association