

{Date}

Dear Senator,

As the Chief Nursing Officer of {hospital} challenged by the Covid-19 pandemic and chronic nationwide nursing shortage, I am deeply concerned about the negative impact unprecedented bureaucratic delays at U.S. Embassies worldwide processing approved EB-3 visas is having on my ability to fill vacant nursing positions. Our situation is dire, and I am asking that you contact the Department of State and demand that they prioritize Healthcare workers for visa exit interviews. Patient care depends on it.

Our nation has long faced a significant shortage of nurses and health care workers, and this shortage now poses a risk to our medical system's ability to respond to this crisis. When the immigrant visa bans of PP10014 and PP10052 were in effect, priority was automatically given to processing visas for doctors and nurses because they were exempt. Now, however, with the immigrant visa bans lifted, nurses must compete with other visa immigrant applicants for processing capacity. Further, the guidance Department of State provided to U.S. embassies on April 30 listed employment-based visas for nurses as the lowest priority for processing and scheduling exit interviews.

Anecdotally, nurses with an approved I-140 report that,

- Thousands of nurses who have had an immigrant visa interview, but the Consulate or Embassy (collectively "Post") has not issued the visa.
- An average of 422 days for the USCIS approved I-140 file to be shipped from the National Visa Center to the Post. It usually takes about four months.
- An average of 70 days from the interview itself until the immigrant visa is issued. Normally, this happens within one week.

The federal government has already taken action to address provider shortages in our nation's healthcare system. For instance, the Bureau of Consular Affairs at the U.S. Department of State recently encouraged medical professionals with approved U.S. immigrant or nonimmigrant visas to schedule visa interviews so that they can help our country assist with COVID-19 treatment efforts. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (V.A.) received waiver authority to re-hire retired V.A. healthcare workers to address this crisis. These actions show our federal government is aware of the compounding effects of our country's provider shortage and the COVID-19 crisis on our healthcare system.

While these actions will provide relief for immigrant and nonimmigrant doctors, they do not provide relief for our nation's nursing staff, who are working around the clock to fight this crisis. We ask that you demand that the Department of State use every authority provided to them under the law to expedite their processing of EB-3 visas for immigrant nurses so that our hospitals can have the support they need as they combat this virus.

Nurses provide critical care to patients and their families. They help doctors extend the reach of their care. They are on the front lines of our medical system's work to combat the coronavirus. Our nation's hospitals will be overwhelmed if they are not able to hire more nursing staff. We urge you to help hospitals address this crisis by expediting the processing of visas for immigrant nurses by the Department of State.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

{Name and title}