

August 17, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

The undersigned organizations represent our nation's long term and post-acute care providers who care for millions of individuals that are frail, elderly, or disabled. We are contacting you regarding the Immigrant Visa Prioritization update issued by the State Department on April 30, 2021. This guidance placed nurses and other skilled healthcare professionals in the lowest priority tier for the visa authorization process for entry into the United States. This categorization is causing significant delays of entry into the United States for a desperately needed population of foreign-trained immigrant health care workers and nurses. Currently, one-sixth of our health care work force is foreign born.

Owners and operators of skilled nursing facilities, assisted living communities and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are currently faced with a significant work force shortage due to the strain on the country's health care system during the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of qualified and trained workers in the United States. This work force shortage is directly affecting the ability of our members to provide their patients and communities with the utmost care they are entitled to receive.

By amending the Immigrant Visa Prioritization update and prioritizing the entry of foreign-trained nurses and health care workers into the United States, we could significantly accelerate the timeline under which these health care professionals could enter the United States. This would allow us to continue to provide quality care for our patients and residents.

We also would be happy to meet with you to discuss the current workforce crisis we are facing, and how this effort would greatly help our nation's long term care providers and the vulnerable population they serve.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.