

International Physician Licenses

The United States faces a healthcare provider shortage that is only getting worse. The Association of American Medical Colleges projects this shortage could exceed 200,000 doctors over the next decade.¹ And this crisis affects rural communities at a disproportionate rate.²

Doctors licensed abroad who have years of training and experience cannot practice in the United States without repeating a multi-year post-med school residency training program.

Internationally-licensed doctors who already live in the United States often take jobs outside the medical field and cannot serve patients because they completed residency training outside the United States or Canada.

The Solution

Open pathways for doctors licensed abroad—who have years of training and experience—to help to alleviate the healthcare shortage.



Allow internationally licensed doctors to practice without having to repeat a residency program.



Ensure internationally licensed doctors meet or exceed U.S. standards.



Let hospitals, physician practices, and other healthcare providers sponsor and mentor international doctors as they transition to U.S. practice.



Automatically convert provisional licenses for sponsored, internationally-licensed, doctors to full licenses after three years of successful practice.

Why It Matters

Rural communities are losing their doctors at an alarming rate—leaving some entirely without immediate access to medical care. Pregnant women are especially affected by this crisis as maternal mortality rates continue to increase.

Patients everywhere face long and growing wait times to see doctors, meaning many people go without care.

States' redundant residency requirements force internationally-trained physicians to spend years in low-paid training roles. This discourages top international doctors from even trying to practice in the U.S., and others already in the country choose not to practice medicine at all.

Bottom Line

Roughly a quarter million U.S. doctors earned their medical degree abroad and are already providing safe, effective care for patients across the country. Creating smoother pathways for more internationally-trained doctors to practice in the U.S. without wasting years in redundant training will increase access to care and improve patient outcomes for millions of Americans.

¹ IHS Markit Ltd. “The Complexities of Physician Supply and Demand: Projections From 2019 to 2034.” June 2021. Association of American Medical Colleges. <<https://www.aamc.org/media/54681/download>>.

² Jonathan Wolfson, “Addressing rural physician shortages – the urgent need for licensing reform,” The Center Square, October 9, 2023, <https://www.thecentersquare.com/opinion/article_baf26fce-66e0-11ee-a2c5-7b63f909e968.html>.