



April 23, 2008

The Honorable Kent Conrad  
United States Senate  
530 Senate Hart Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Conrad:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), representing 125,000 internal medicine physicians and medical students, I am writing to applaud your efforts to expand and permanently reauthorize the Conrad State 30 J-1 visa waiver program under the "Conrad State 30 Improvement Act" (S. 2672). Approximately thirty percent of the College's members are international medical graduates (IMGs). The College has long recognized the value of IMGs and their contributions to health care delivery in this country. Many IMGs provide care in underserved areas by participating in J-1 visa waiver programs, including Conrad 30.

A 2006 GAO study revealed that the use of J-1 visa waivers remains a major means of placing physicians in underserved areas of the United States. In fact, the number of physicians practicing in underserved areas through the use of J-1 visa waivers was roughly one and half times the number of physicians practicing through National Health Service Corps programs. Over half of these J-1 visa waiver physicians practiced internal medicine.

The College supports your proposed reforms for the Conrad 30 program including eliminating the need for repeated reauthorization of the program. The College is also supportive of the provision in your legislation that will increase the number of Conrad 30 J-1 waivers to address the increased demand for such waivers by states, while maintaining a well-balanced national distribution. In addition, the provision in the legislation that increases from 5 to 10 the number of "flex-slots" that states can use to place physicians in non-Health Professions Shortage Area (HPSA) facilities that serve patients who live in underserved areas grants states more flexibility in meeting the needs of their underserved residents. Finally, your proposed green card cap exemption would provide an important incentive for international medical graduates to practice in underserved communities.

The College thanks you for your leadership on this important matter and looks forward to working with you to permanently reauthorize the Conrad State 30 program with these positive reforms to direct more physicians into health professions shortage areas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David C. Dale". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David C. Dale MD, FACP  
President