

HB22-1050: CREATING PATHWAYS TO STRENGTHEN COLORADO'S PHYSICIAN WORKFORCE

Communities across Colorado face healthcare worker shortages—often to the detriment of residents who lack access to essential preventative and ongoing care. This pain is acutely felt in rural and underserved regions. In fact, the [U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration](#) currently designates 123 Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas and 48 Medically Underserved Areas in Colorado.

Meanwhile, Colorado is home to a robust community of new Americans—known as **International Medical Graduates (IMGs)**—who completed their medical training outside of the U.S. or Canada and whose skills are currently underutilized. Too often, their expertise is wasted or lost to other states,

Last year, Governor Jared Polis and [12 state legislators](#) tasked the longstanding Nurse-Physician Advisory Task Force for Colorado Healthcare ([NPATCH](#)) under the Department of Regulatory Agencies with crafting policy proposals regarding the licensure of IMGs. NPATCH's resulting [recommendations](#) form the basis of the provisions in [HB22-1050](#).

Colorado's Healthcare Workforce Is Falling Short & Missing Out

- By 2030, Colorado is expected to have a statewide shortage of over 2,400 physicians.
- In 2021, IMGs represented 21% of medical residency matches nationwide compared to only 4.2% in Colorado. Only 2.5% of IMGs have matched to a Colorado residency program in the past decade.
- 35 counties in Colorado have areas that are considered medically underserved.

HB22-1050 ADDRESSES COLORADO'S PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE WITH IMPROVED LICENSURE PATHWAYS FOR IMGs BY:

- Creating programs to assist IMGs in navigating the re-licensure process.
- Establishing hands-on clinical readiness programs.
- Equalizing IMG residency licensing requirements to be the same as those for U.S. medical graduates.
- Earmarking residency slots for IMGs in Colorado.
- Extending physician re-entry licenses for exceptionally qualified IMGs.

VOTE YES ON HB22-1050

For more information, please contact:

Carrie Miller, cmiller@springinstitute.org | Mathew Mengesha, mmengesha@springinstitute.org
Victoria Francis, victoria.francis@rescue.org



WHO ARE INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES?

IMGs include refugees, asylees, Special Immigrant Visa recipients, and other immigrants who are eager to contribute their expertise as physicians and healthcare professionals in Colorado

Despite completing medical school and practicing in their home countries, IMGs have to redo expensive and time consuming parts of that process and overcome other inequitable barriers for a fair chance at practicing medicine in the U.S.

WASTED TALENT, UNDERSERVED PATIENTS

300+ 

IMGs in Colorado currently prevented from entering the healthcare workforce.

 2

counties in rural Colorado lack even a single practicing physician.

1,900+ 

patients that can be served annually per every physician added to Colorado's workforce.

Support for HB22-1050:

Wafa's Story

Dr. Wafa El-ejmi was born in Greeley and then lived in Libya for 16 years, where she graduated medical school and did her residency training. She returned to Colorado in 2007. She currently works as a clinical researcher in Denver but dreams of practicing medicine again.

For as long as I can remember, I've been inspired by everyone around me to teach and help others. My childhood idol was our next door neighbor, a medical doctor with a huge heart. I've also always been driven to learn and succeed academically, so healthcare is a great fit for my passions.

I worked hard to complete medical school as the youngest student in my cohort and graduated at age 23 after training and excelling in several specialties. I spent my first year of residency in the cardiology ICU, where I thrived performing advanced procedures like pacemaker placement. I transitioned into OBGYN because I saw a particular need for better preventative care for women in my community. Within six months, I was performing surgeries like ovarian cyst removals, cesarean sections, and even a hysterectomy. There's nothing more special than monitoring pregnancies and having the honor of delivering a healthy soul into this world. I also served as a sought-after outpatient clinic provider offering preventative care and supporting health literacy among community members just like my own father, who may have been at serious risk for a heart attack if his hypertension and diabetes were not thankfully diagnosed through preventative care.

My medical career was thriving in Libya, but with family roots in Colorado and the United States' worldwide reputation of being advanced in medicine, I returned in 2007 with high expectations to continue treating patients here. Little did I know that despite my experience, dedication, and drive, it has been so hard to contribute at the level I expected to in Colorado's healthcare workforce.

By all accounts, I've done everything "right." I've successfully passed the rigorous USMLEs (including Step 3), completed numerous hands-on US clinical experiences, and networked with several American-trained physicians who've recognized me as a colleague. I also obtained a coveted research position that ought to boost my residency application. For the past 6 years, I've been fulfilling my passion for patient care and contributing my talents as a cancer researcher. I'm also a go-to resource in my community for my medical knowledge and referrals. But it's not enough. Through no fault of my own or lack of effort, I have not yet successfully matched to an American residency program. This means I cannot move forward on my path toward licensure as a physician in Colorado or anywhere in the U.S.

Knowing there's growing shortages in Colorado's healthcare workforce makes it even more frustrating that the licensure system is holding back trained, dedicated professionals like me. All Coloradans deserve to access the healthcare they need, regardless of what region of the state they live in, and qualified IMGs should have the chance to contribute to Colorado's healthcare workforce rather than wasting our expertise or taking our skills to other states. Let's pass HB22-1050 to strengthen Colorado's healthcare workforce by creating improved pathways to medical licensure for IMGs who simply want the chance to give back to the world and make it a better, healthier place.

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