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Their Story is Our Story Applauds the Signing of Virginia House Bill 995 and Continues Efforts to Open Doors for Foreign-trained Medical Professionals in Other States

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Salt Lake City, UT - April 11, 2024 - Their Story is Our Story (TSOS), a non-profit organization that collects and shares the experiences of refugees to deepen understanding and influence action, applauds the signing of Virginia House Bill 995 into law by Governor Glenn Youngkin, after its unanimous passage through the Virginia House of Delegates and Senate. It will create a pathway for foreign-trained doctors who have immigrated to the state, including those whose careers were interrupted by forcible displacement, to fill workforce gaps in medically underserved communities.

International Medical Graduates (IMGs) from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, and other countries now residing in Virginia will be able to provide much-needed healthcare to rural, immigrant, and communities of color in the state. The Association of American

Medical Colleges estimates that the United States could face a shortage of nearly 125,000 medical doctors by 2032.

“We began interviewing refugee doctors in late 2022, learning about their passion for medicine and some of the barriers they face in returning to medical practice,” said Brandi Kilmer, Co-Founder of the Refugee Physicians Advocacy (RPA) Coalition and Community Programs Coordinator - Washington D.C. at TSOS. “It’s been incredibly rewarding to be part of a growing coalition of partners working to remove those barriers. We thank chief-patron Delegate Kathy Tran and our partners at Lutheran Social Services National Capital Area, World Education Services, and NOVA Friends of Refugees for their leadership, and all those who endorsed helping to remove a significant barrier with this bill. It has restored hope to many doctors in our network.”

Virginia House Bill 995 empowers Virginia’s Board of Medicine to issue two-year provisional licenses to qualified IMGs. IMGs must be appropriately licensed by an accredited university that’s certified by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG), have practiced medicine for at least five years, and have passed the U.S. Medical Licensing Exam Steps 1 and 2. After the initial two years, the licensure is renewable for two additional years if the physician practices in a medically underserved area. Doctors who complete these four years of practice may apply for full licensure.

“At TSOS, everything begins with a story. The successful passage of this legislation began with foreign-trained medical professionals who were willing to share their experiences. We believe the coalition-building model the Virginia team pursued, together with personal storytelling, can be replicated in other states to open doors and improve outcomes for countless medical professionals and their patients,” said Kristen Smith Dayley, Executive Director at TSOS.

Similar legislation licensing IMGs has been ratified in Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Tennessee, and Washington, and other states have bills in motion this year. Additionally, U.S. Senator Tim Kaine recently introduced the [Welcome Back to the Health Care Workforce Act](#), legislation to address healthcare workforce shortages nationally.

Related Resources:

- [RPA HB995 Letter of Support with Endorsements](#)
- [Refugee Physicians: An Untapped Resource](#)
- [Pathways for Skilled Professionals](#)
- [TSOS Joins Panel Discussion at National Conference to Advocate for Refugee Doctors](#)
- [The Taliban Came and Gave Me a Warning, But I Did Not Stop](#)
- [A Career Pathway and a Safe Place to Work](#)
- [We Took Our Own Path](#)

About Their Story is Our Story:

Their Story is Our Story (TSOS) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to collecting and sharing the experiences of refugees to encourage empathy, advance public policy, and help communities welcome forcibly displaced people. For more information, please visit www.tsosrefugees.org.

About Refugee Physicians Advocacy Coalition:

Refugee Physicians Advocacy (RPA) is a coalition of nonprofits led by [Georgetown University School of Medicine](#), [NOVA Friends of Refugees](#), and Their Story is Our Story with technical support from [World Education Services](#). We assist refugee physicians in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) region to continue their careers through mentorship, streamlined upskilling, legislative and regulatory change, and grants.

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