

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 8, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Blinken:

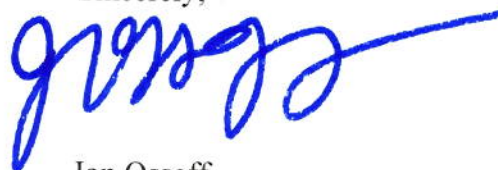
I write today to express my concern over the continued processing backlogs of qualified nurses and other health care professionals from around the world who are willing and able to work in the U.S. health care system during this pandemic and amidst critical shortages of health care workers. These qualified individuals are essential to our country's ability to fight the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and deliver high-quality care to patients. I urge you to take immediate action and direct the State Department to increase the resources available to address this backlog of health care professionals.

Effective September 13, 2021, the State Department updated the visa prioritization guidance which now gives embassies the option to process health care workers on an expedited basis since they are presently in the lowest priority tier. Despite this guidance, there is still a significant processing backlog of accomplished health care professionals that could be treating American patients today.

Health care professionals from around the world have played vital roles through the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and are crucial members of our nation's health care workforce. These professionals must meet strict eligibility requirements before making it to the last step of being issued a visa. The Department of Labor has certified that local labor markets need additional trained professionals. As long as the delays in processing visas continue, our hospitals will continue to face critical staffing shortages.

Applying more resources to process visa applications safely and efficiently can play an immediate and tangible role in combating COVID-19 in America and ensuring much-needed professionals join the ranks of our health care workforce. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration to this urgent need.

Sincerely,



Jon Ossoff
U.S. Senator

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AND URBAN AFFAIRS

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