



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

July 2, 2020

Melissa Arbuckle, MD, PhD  
President  
American Association of Directors of  
Psychiatric Residency Training  
P.O. Box 30618  
Indianapolis, IN 46230

Dear Dr. Arbuckle:

Thank you for your May 15, 2020 in support for International Medical Graduates (IMGs). Mr. Cuccinelli has asked that I respond on his behalf.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has no greater responsibility than ensuring the safety and security of our country. Responding to the coronavirus pandemic requires everyone to work within rapidly changing, complex circumstances that create a variety of situations and conditions unique to individuals and communities. Our primary goal is to ensure the safety of the public and our employees as the situation evolves.

We recognize that there are immigration-related challenges that IMGs and others face as a direct result of the national emergency. We carefully analyze these issues and leverage our resources to effectively address these challenges within our existing authorities. DHS continues to act to protect the American people and our communities and is considering a number of policies and procedures to improve the employment opportunities of U.S. workers during this pandemic.

We appreciate your suggestions regarding the processing of petitions and applications for physicians and their families. With regard to the visa process for individuals outside of the United States, we defer to our colleagues at the Department of State. For individuals within the United States, it is important for us to emphasize that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) continues to accept and process benefit requests including extension and change of status applications for physicians, as well as applications for employment authorization.<sup>1</sup> USCIS considers special circumstances and expedite requests for individual requests on a case-by-case basis. Further, USCIS recently announced the resumption of premium processing service for certain employment-based petitions, including H-1B petitions. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, USCIS also announced additional flexibilities, including a temporary policy change for certain foreign medical graduates who have received a waiver of the 2-year foreign residence

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<sup>1</sup> The USCIS website provides additional information regarding special circumstances, expedite requests, and options for nonimmigrants to extend or change their status.

Melissa Arbuckle

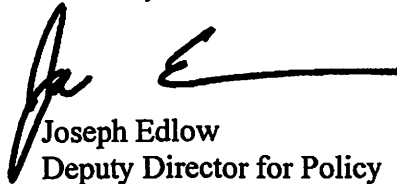
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requirement based on their agreement to practice in a medically underserved area or in connection with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.<sup>2</sup>

DHS will continue to communicate publicly regarding any changes we make to ensure that the public is fully informed of the steps we are taking to address the challenges resulting from this national emergency. As we begin moving toward reopening the country, DHS remains steadfast in our commitment to protect the safety of the American people.

Thank you again for your letter and your interest in this matter. We continue to explore available options within our statutory and regulatory authority, and your concerns will be taken into consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Edlow', is written over the typed name. The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joseph Edlow  
Deputy Director for Policy

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<sup>2</sup> USCIS Policy Memorandum, PM-602-0178, *Temporary Policy Changes for Certain Foreign Medical Graduates During the COVID-19 National Emergency* (May 11, 2020).