

# Immigration Order Is Bad Idea, Say 12 Doc Groups

## At very least, restrictions should be eased for medical personnel, patients

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President Trump's executive order on immigration should be rescinded, but if that does not happen soon, the Trump administration should take steps to selectively ease travel restrictions that impact medical education and access to healthcare services, according to 12 different physician organizations.

The 12 organizations -- which include the American College of Physicians, the American College of Chest Physicians, the American Society of Hematology, and the American Society of Nephrology -- said in a [letter sent to Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly](#) that they were particularly concerned that "by restricting entry of physicians and medical students from seven designated Muslim majority countries, the order will undermine medical education and result in patients losing access to their doctors."

"We are also greatly concerned that the 120-day ban on accepting refugees, and the indefinite ban on Syrian refugees, will contribute to an ongoing public health crisis for those affected, needlessly subjecting them to violence, injury, illness, deprivation and even death," the letter continued.

While the groups said they were pleased that the order had been temporarily stayed, they also recommended four steps the administration could take in the meantime to selectively ease travel bans on affected patients and healthcare personnel:

- Reinstatement of the Visa Interview Waiver Program. Suspension of the program "[risks creating substantial backlogs](#)" in the processing of new and renewal visas for trainees from any foreign country -- delays that create substantial problems for residency programs with trainees on visas and that could interfere with the residency match process this year," they said, quoting from an article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.
- Remove restrictions on entering the U.S. for physicians from the seven designated countries who have been approved for J-1 or H-1B visas, and students from those countries with F-1 visas who have been accepted to U.S. medical schools.

- Develop and implement a plan to allow physicians from the seven designated countries to obtain travel visas to travel to the U.S. for medical conferences and other medical and research-related engagements.
- Make it a priority to implement a process to admit refugees, without further delay, who had already been vetted and approved for entry prior to the executive order and who are in need of urgent medical care.

"Until or unless the executive order is completely rescinded or permanently blocked, it is essential that DHS [the Department of Homeland Security] move forward to ensure that restrictions on physicians and medical students are not reimposed, and that priority is given to refugees with medical conditions needing treatment," the letter concluded.

Meanwhile, the American Medical Association (AMA) also [released a letter](#) Tuesday -- this one was in support of legislation by Reps. [Mike Coffman](#) (R-Colo.) and [Luis Gutiérrez](#) (D-Ill.) -- that would provide temporary immigration status relief for illegal immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children.

"I am writing to express our support for [H.R. 496](#), the 'Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy Act' (BRIDGE Act), which would provide employment authorization and temporary relief from deportation for undocumented young immigrants who have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status and DACA-eligible individuals," wrote AMA Executive Vice-President and CEO [James Madara, MD](#). "By providing legal status to such individuals for 3 years, this legislation would provide important protection and stability until a permanent solution on lawful immigration status for DACA recipients is implemented."

Madara noted that "according to the Association of American Medical Colleges, 61 U.S. allopathic medical schools reported that they considered applications from students with DACA status for the 2016/2017 academic year. In 2016, 112 students with DACA status applied to U.S. allopathic medical schools, and 34 of those individuals matriculated, bringing total allopathic medical school enrollment of DACA-eligible individuals to approximately 70 students."

"One study has predicted that the DACA initiative could introduce 5,400 previously ineligible physicians into the U.S. healthcare system in the coming decades," he continued. "The AMA strongly supports medical students and physicians with DACA status, as well as those young people who are considering a career in medicine ... DACA recipients should be able to continue to study and work without fear of being deported."

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