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April 21, 2020

The Honorable James E. Clyburn
Chairman, Select Committee on the Coronavirus Crisis
U.S. Capitol, H-329
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Clyburn,

Thank you for your leadership as Chair of the Select Committee on the Coronavirus Crisis. I write to urge you to take action to protect our medical professionals who hold H-1B visas, especially as these workers are essential to confront and combat the current epidemic.

Health centers across the country are being hit hard by the coronavirus crisis. They're cutting down on appointments and procedures that can be postponed, and they're losing revenue – patient visits are down nearly 60% for some health centers¹. That means budget cuts, furloughs, and layoffs of health professionals at a time when we need them most.

Many of these medical professionals are in the country on H-1B work visas, hired to fill the nation's shortage of healthcare professionals, which is particularly problematic in California's Central Valley. Because of H-1B rules, they can't be furloughed, and if they're laid off, they lose their visas and their community loses doctors, nurses, and physician's assistants *permanently*. Now is not the time to be sending medical professionals away – their patients need them, their communities need them, and their coworkers need them.

More than 90 percent of the U.S. population is under a stay-at-home order right now. Requiring people – particularly healthcare workers – to move, and in many cases use public transportation, during this time is irresponsible. It could put them and the wide range of other essential workers with whom they would have to interact with at an unnecessary risk.

I am working on a bill to extend the 60-day grace period for an H-1B healthcare worker who loses his or her job to last for the duration of the Coronavirus crisis, so that even if their health center is struggling, they aren't forced to abandon the community they serve in the middle of a crisis. I urge you to include my bill, which would solve this problem, in the next Coronavirus relief package.

¹ <https://calmatters.org/california-divide/2020/04/not-enough-patients-community-clinics-california/>

The clock is already ticking. A worker laid off even two weeks after Governor Newsom declared his stay-at-home order would have to leave by the end of May. Thank you again for your leadership and for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Harder". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the word "Harder".

Josh Harder

CC

Jerrold Nadler

Bennie G. Thompson

Robert C. Scott