

THE SOLUTION:

Make nursing education programs part of STEM for work authorization.

**THE HISTORY**

In 2008, the Department of Homeland Security announced foreign nationals holding F-1 student visas could extend their stay in the United States by 17 months beyond the expiration of their visas to complete what is considered “optional practical training”—an internship or job-related to their recently completed field of study—for students who receive degrees in a STEM field.

This program has been upheld in court numerous times and is now firmly entrenched in the fabric of the American labor market. The program is often used as a bridge to permanent residency and citizenship for students who receive an American education in technically challenging fields with labor shortages.

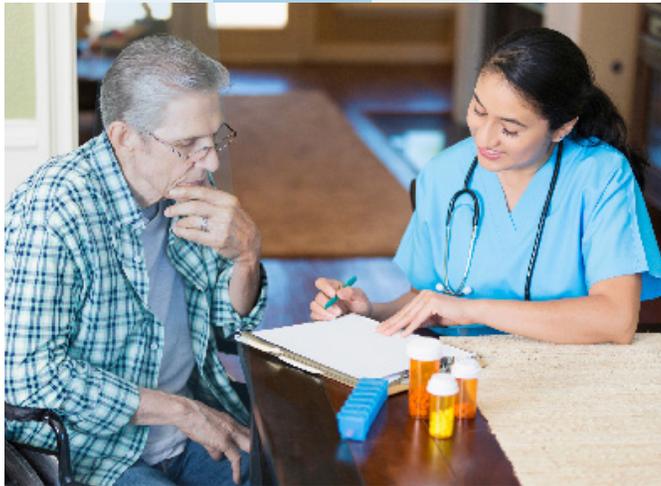
THE BIG PICTURE

Nursing is a technically challenging field with a growing labor shortage. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and backed by statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 200,000 nursing vacancies are projected to occur nationwide every year until 2031.

Unfortunately, the labor market is not supplying enough nurses to cover these vacancies; in the years 2020 and 2021, the number of nurses in the workforce shrunk by 100,000.

This lies at the base of the rising, inflationary nursing costs hospitals and patients have been forced to bear over the past few years.

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THE PROBLEM

A Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree does not qualify for DHS's STEM OPT 17-month visa extension program despite its relationship with science and technology.

Additionally, DHS' profound backlog in processing H-class work visas means many students who receive a high-quality American education and have jobs lined up after graduation are forced to return to their home counties for visa processing.

A CONGRESSIONAL SOLUTION

Congress should remedy this situation by passing a bill that lists Bachelor of Science Nursing degrees in Department of Homeland Security's STEM OPT visa extension program, thus allowing these students to fill much-needed nursing job vacancies here in the United States.



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