

One Hundred Sixth Congress
of the
United States of America

AT THE FIRST SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Wednesday,
the sixth day of January, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine*

An Act

To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act with respect to the requirements for the admission of nonimmigrant nurses who will practice in health professional shortage areas.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of
the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Nursing Relief for Disadvantaged Areas Act of 1999”.

**SEC. 2. REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION OF NONIMMIGRANT NURSES
IN HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREAS DURING
4-YEAR PERIOD.**

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW NONIMMIGRANT CLASSIFICATION FOR NONIMMIGRANT NURSES IN HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREAS.—Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)) is amended by striking “; or” at the end and inserting the following: “, or (c) who is coming temporarily to the United States to perform services as a registered nurse, who meets the qualifications described in section 212(m)(1), and with respect to whom the Secretary of Labor determines and certifies to the Attorney General that an unexpired attestation is on file and in effect under section 212(m)(2) for the facility (as defined in section 212(m)(6)) for which the alien will perform the services; or”.

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—Section 212(m) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(m)) is amended to read as follows:
“(m)(1) The qualifications referred to in section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c), with respect to an alien who is coming to the United States to perform nursing services for a facility, are that the alien—

“(A) has obtained a full and unrestricted license to practice professional nursing in the country where the alien obtained nursing education or has received nursing education in the United States;

“(B) has passed an appropriate examination (recognized in regulations promulgated in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services) or has a full and unrestricted license under State law to practice professional nursing in the State of intended employment; and

“(C) is fully qualified and eligible under the laws (including such temporary or interim licensing requirements which authorize the nurse to be employed) governing the place of intended employment to engage in the practice of professional

nursing as a registered nurse immediately upon admission to the United States and is authorized under such laws to be employed by the facility.

“(2)(A) The attestation referred to in section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c), with respect to a facility for which an alien will perform services, is an attestation as to the following:

“(i) The facility meets all the requirements of paragraph (6).

“(ii) The employment of the alien will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of registered nurses similarly employed.

“(iii) The alien employed by the facility will be paid the wage rate for registered nurses similarly employed by the facility.

“(iv) The facility has taken and is taking timely and significant steps designed to recruit and retain sufficient registered nurses who are United States citizens or immigrants who are authorized to perform nursing services, in order to remove as quickly as reasonably possible the dependence of the facility on nonimmigrant registered nurses.

“(v) There is not a strike or lockout in the course of a labor dispute, the facility did not lay off and will not lay off a registered nurse employed by the facility within the period beginning 90 days before and ending 90 days after the date of filing of any visa petition, and the employment of such an alien is not intended or designed to influence an election for a bargaining representative for registered nurses of the facility.

“(vi) At the time of the filing of the petition for registered nurses under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c), notice of the filing has been provided by the facility to the bargaining representative of the registered nurses at the facility or, where there is no such bargaining representative, notice of the filing has been provided to the registered nurses employed at the facility through posting in conspicuous locations.

“(vii) The facility will not, at any time, employ a number of aliens issued visas or otherwise provided nonimmigrant status under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c) that exceeds 33 percent of the total number of registered nurses employed by the facility.

“(viii) The facility will not, with respect to any alien issued a visa or otherwise provided nonimmigrant status under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c)—

“(I) authorize the alien to perform nursing services at any worksite other than a worksite controlled by the facility; or

“(II) transfer the place of employment of the alien from one worksite to another.

Nothing in clause (iv) shall be construed as requiring a facility to have taken significant steps described in such clause before the date of the enactment of the Nursing Relief for Disadvantaged Areas Act of 1999. A copy of the attestation shall be provided, within 30 days of the date of filing, to registered nurses employed at the facility on the date of filing.

“(B) For purposes of subparagraph (A)(iv), each of the following shall be considered a significant step reasonably designed to recruit and retain registered nurses:

“(i) Operating a training program for registered nurses at the facility or financing (or providing participation in) a training program for registered nurses elsewhere.

“(ii) Providing career development programs and other methods of facilitating health care workers to become registered nurses.

“(iii) Paying registered nurses wages at a rate higher than currently being paid to registered nurses similarly employed in the geographic area.

“(iv) Providing reasonable opportunities for meaningful salary advancement by registered nurses.

The steps described in this subparagraph shall not be considered to be an exclusive list of the significant steps that may be taken to meet the conditions of subparagraph (A)(iv). Nothing in this subparagraph shall require a facility to take more than one step if the facility can demonstrate that taking a second step is not reasonable.

“(C) Subject to subparagraph (E), an attestation under subparagraph (A)—

“(i) shall expire on the date that is the later of—

“(I) the end of the one-year period beginning on the date of its filing with the Secretary of Labor; or

“(II) the end of the period of admission under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c) of the last alien with respect to whose admission it was applied (in accordance with clause (ii)); and

“(ii) shall apply to petitions filed during the one-year period beginning on the date of its filing with the Secretary of Labor if the facility states in each such petition that it continues to comply with the conditions in the attestation.

“(D) A facility may meet the requirements under this paragraph with respect to more than one registered nurse in a single petition.

“(E)(i) The Secretary of Labor shall compile and make available for public examination in a timely manner in Washington, D.C., a list identifying facilities which have filed petitions for non-immigrants under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c) and, for each such facility, a copy of the facility’s attestation under subparagraph (A) (and accompanying documentation) and each such petition filed by the facility.

“(ii) The Secretary of Labor shall establish a process, including reasonable time limits, for the receipt, investigation, and disposition of complaints respecting a facility’s failure to meet conditions attested to or a facility’s misrepresentation of a material fact in an attestation. Complaints may be filed by any aggrieved person or organization (including bargaining representatives, associations deemed appropriate by the Secretary, and other aggrieved parties as determined under regulations of the Secretary). The Secretary shall conduct an investigation under this clause if there is reasonable cause to believe that a facility fails to meet conditions attested to. Subject to the time limits established under this clause, this subparagraph shall apply regardless of whether an attestation is expired or unexpired at the time a complaint is filed.

“(iii) Under such process, the Secretary shall provide, within 180 days after the date such a complaint is filed, for a determination as to whether or not a basis exists to make a finding described in clause (iv). If the Secretary determines that such a basis exists, the Secretary shall provide for notice of such determination to

the interested parties and an opportunity for a hearing on the complaint within 60 days of the date of the determination.

“(iv) If the Secretary of Labor finds, after notice and opportunity for a hearing, that a facility (for which an attestation is made) has failed to meet a condition attested to or that there was a misrepresentation of material fact in the attestation, the Secretary shall notify the Attorney General of such finding and may, in addition, impose such other administrative remedies (including civil monetary penalties in an amount not to exceed \$1,000 per nurse per violation, with the total penalty not to exceed \$10,000 per violation) as the Secretary determines to be appropriate. Upon receipt of such notice, the Attorney General shall not approve petitions filed with respect to a facility during a period of at least one year for nurses to be employed by the facility.

“(v) In addition to the sanctions provided for under clause (iv), if the Secretary of Labor finds, after notice and an opportunity for a hearing, that a facility has violated the condition attested to under subparagraph (A)(iii) (relating to payment of registered nurses at the prevailing wage rate), the Secretary shall order the facility to provide for payment of such amounts of back pay as may be required to comply with such condition.

“(F)(i) The Secretary of Labor shall impose on a facility filing an attestation under subparagraph (A) a filing fee, in an amount prescribed by the Secretary based on the costs of carrying out the Secretary’s duties under this subsection, but not exceeding \$250.

“(ii) Fees collected under this subparagraph shall be deposited in a fund established for this purpose in the Treasury of the United States.

“(iii) The collected fees in the fund shall be available to the Secretary of Labor, to the extent and in such amounts as may be provided in appropriations Acts, to cover the costs described in clause (i), in addition to any other funds that are available to the Secretary to cover such costs.

“(3) The period of admission of an alien under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c) shall be 3 years.

“(4) The total number of nonimmigrant visas issued pursuant to petitions granted under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c) in each fiscal year shall not exceed 500. The number of such visas issued for employment in each State in each fiscal year shall not exceed the following:

“(A) For States with populations of less than 9,000,000, based upon the 1990 decennial census of population, 25 visas.

“(B) For States with populations of 9,000,000 or more, based upon the 1990 decennial census of population, 50 visas.

“(C) If the total number of visas available under this paragraph for a fiscal year quarter exceeds the number of qualified nonimmigrants who may be issued such visas during those quarters, the visas made available under this paragraph shall be issued without regard to the numerical limitation under subparagraph (A) or (B) of this paragraph during the last fiscal year quarter.

“(5) A facility that has filed a petition under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c) to employ a nonimmigrant to perform nursing services for the facility—

“(A) shall provide the nonimmigrant a wage rate and working conditions commensurate with those of nurses similarly employed by the facility;

“(B) shall require the nonimmigrant to work hours commensurate with those of nurses similarly employed by the facility; and

“(C) shall not interfere with the right of the nonimmigrant to join or organize a union.

“(6) For purposes of this subsection and section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c), the term ‘facility’ means a subsection (d) hospital (as defined in section 1886(d)(1)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ww(d)(1)(B))) that meets the following requirements:

“(A) As of March 31, 1997, the hospital was located in a health professional shortage area (as defined in section 332 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254e)).

“(B) Based on its settled cost report filed under title XVIII of the Social Security Act for its cost reporting period beginning during fiscal year 1994—

“(i) the hospital has not less than 190 licensed acute care beds;

“(ii) the number of the hospital’s inpatient days for such period which were made up of patients who (for such days) were entitled to benefits under part A of such title is not less than 35 percent of the total number of such hospital’s acute care inpatient days for such period; and

“(iii) the number of the hospital’s inpatient days for such period which were made up of patients who (for such days) were eligible for medical assistance under a State plan approved under title XIX of the Social Security Act, is not less than 28 percent of the total number of such hospital’s acute care inpatient days for such period.

“(7) For purposes of paragraph (2)(A)(v), the term ‘lay off’, with respect to a worker—

“(A) means to cause the worker’s loss of employment, other than through a discharge for inadequate performance, violation of workplace rules, cause, voluntary departure, voluntary retirement, or the expiration of a grant or contract; but

“(B) does not include any situation in which the worker is offered, as an alternative to such loss of employment, a similar employment opportunity with the same employer at equivalent or higher compensation and benefits than the position from which the employee was discharged, regardless of whether or not the employee accepts the offer.

Nothing in this paragraph is intended to limit an employee’s or an employer’s rights under a collective bargaining agreement or other employment contract.”.

(c) REPEALER.—Clause (i) of section 101(a)(15)(H) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)) is amended by striking subclause (a).

(d) IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor (in consultation, to the extent required, with the Secretary of Health and Human Services) and the Attorney General shall promulgate final or interim final regulations to carry out section 212(m) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (as amended by subsection (b)).

(e) **LIMITING APPLICATION OF NONIMMIGRANT CHANGES TO 4-YEAR PERIOD.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply to classification petitions filed for nonimmigrant status only during the 4-year period beginning on the date that interim or final regulations are first promulgated under subsection (d).

SEC. 3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE REMEDY FOR NURSING SHORTAGE.

Not later than the last day of the 4-year period described in section 2(e), the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Labor shall jointly submit to the Congress recommendations (including legislative specifications) with respect to the following:

(1) A program to eliminate the dependence of facilities described in section 212(m)(6) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (as amended by section 2(b)) on nonimmigrant registered nurses by providing for a permanent solution to the shortage of registered nurses who are United States citizens or aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residence.

(2) A method of enforcing the requirements imposed on facilities under sections 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(c) and 212(m) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (as amended by section 2) that would be more effective than the process described in section 212(m)(2)(E) of such Act (as so amended).

SEC. 4. CERTIFICATION FOR CERTAIN ALIEN NURSES.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—

(1) Section 212 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(r) Subsection (a)(5)(C) shall not apply to an alien who seeks to enter the United States for the purpose of performing labor as a nurse who presents to the consular officer (or in the case of an adjustment of status, the Attorney General) a certified statement from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (or an equivalent independent credentialing organization approved for the certification of nurses under subsection (a)(5)(C) by the Attorney General in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services) that—

“(1) the alien has a valid and unrestricted license as a nurse in a State where the alien intends to be employed and such State verifies that the foreign licenses of alien nurses are authentic and unencumbered;

“(2) the alien has passed the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX);

“(3) the alien is a graduate of a nursing program—

“(A) in which the language of instruction was English;

“(B) located in a country—

“(i) designated by such commission not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of the Nursing Relief for Disadvantaged Areas Act of 1999, based on such commission’s assessment that the quality of nursing education in that country, and the English language proficiency of those who complete such programs in that country, justify the country’s designation; or

“(ii) designated on the basis of such an assessment by unanimous agreement of such commission and any

equivalent credentialing organizations which have been approved under subsection (a)(5)(C) for the certification of nurses under this subsection; and

“(C)(i) which was in operation on or before the date of the enactment of the Nursing Relief for Disadvantaged Areas Act of 1999; or

“(ii) has been approved by unanimous agreement of such commission and any equivalent credentialing organizations which have been approved under subsection (a)(5)(C) for the certification of nurses under this subsection.”.

(2) Section 212(a)(5)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(5)(C)) is amended by striking “Any alien who seeks” and inserting “Subject to subsection (r), any alien who seeks”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act, without regard to whether or not final regulations to carry out such amendments have been promulgated by such date.

(c) ISSUANCE OF CERTIFIED STATEMENTS.—The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools, or any approved equivalent independent credentialing organization, shall issue certified statements pursuant to the amendment under subsection (a) not more than 35 days after the receipt of a complete application for such a statement.

SEC. 5. NATIONAL INTEREST WAIVERS OF JOB OFFER REQUIREMENTS FOR ALIENS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSIONS HOLDING ADVANCED DEGREES OR ALIENS OF EXCEPTIONAL ABILITY.

Section 203(b)(2)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1153(b)(2)(B)) is amended to read as follows:

“(B) WAIVER OF JOB OFFER.—

“(i) NATIONAL INTEREST WAIVER.—Subject to clause (ii), the Attorney General may, when the Attorney General deems it to be in the national interest, waive the requirements of subparagraph (A) that an alien’s services in the sciences, arts, professions, or business be sought by an employer in the United States.

“(ii) PHYSICIANS WORKING IN SHORTAGE AREAS OR VETERANS FACILITIES.—

“(I) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General shall grant a national interest waiver pursuant to clause (i) on behalf of any alien physician with respect to whom a petition for preference classification has been filed under subparagraph (A) if—

“(aa) the alien physician agrees to work full time as a physician in an area or areas designated by the Secretary of Health and Human Services as having a shortage of health care professionals or at a health care facility under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

“(bb) a Federal agency or a department of public health in any State has previously determined that the alien physician’s work in

such an area or at such facility was in the public interest.

“(II) PROHIBITION.—No permanent resident visa may be issued to an alien physician described in subclause (I) by the Secretary of State under section 204(b), and the Attorney General may not adjust the status of such an alien physician from that of a nonimmigrant alien to that of a permanent resident alien under section 245, until such time as the alien has worked full time as a physician for an aggregate of five years (not including the time served in the status of an alien described in section 101(a)(15)(J)), in an area or areas designated by the Secretary of Health and Human Services as having a shortage of health care professionals or at a health care facility under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

“(III) STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this subparagraph may be construed to prevent the filing of a petition with the Attorney General for classification under section 204(a), or the filing of an application for adjustment of status under section 245, by an alien physician described in subclause (I) prior to the date by which such alien physician has completed the service described in subclause (II).

“(IV) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The requirements of this subsection do not affect waivers on behalf of alien physicians approved under section 203(b)(2)(B) before the enactment date of this subsection. In the case of a physician for whom an application for a waiver was filed under section 203(b)(2)(B) prior to November 1, 1998, the Attorney General shall grant a national interest waiver pursuant to section 203(b)(2)(B) except that the alien is required to have worked full time as a physician for an aggregate of three years (not including time served in the status of an alien described in section 101(a)(15)(J)) before a visa can be issued to the alien under section 204(b) or the status of the alien is adjusted to permanent resident under section 245.”.

SEC. 6. FURTHER CLARIFICATION OF TREATMENT OF CERTAIN INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTING FIRMS.

Section 206(a) of the Immigration Act of 1990 (8 U.S.C. 1101 note) is amended to read as follows:

“(a) CLARIFICATION OF TREATMENT OF CERTAIN INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTING AND MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRMS.—In applying sections 101(a)(15)(L) and 203(b)(1)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and for no other purpose, in the case of a partnership that is organized in the United States to provide accounting or management consulting services and that markets its accounting or management consulting services under an internationally recognized name under an agreement with a worldwide coordinating organization that is collectively owned and controlled by the member accounting and management consulting firms or by the elected

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members (partners, shareholders, members, employees) thereof, an entity that is organized outside the United States to provide accounting or management consulting services shall be considered to be an affiliate of the United States accounting or management consulting partnership if it markets its accounting or management consulting services under the same internationally recognized name directly or indirectly under an agreement with the same worldwide coordinating organization of which the United States partnership is also a member. Those partnerships organized within the United States and entities organized outside the United States which are considered affiliates under this subsection shall continue to be considered affiliates to the extent such firms enter into a plan of association with a successor worldwide coordinating organization, which need not be collectively owned and controlled.”.

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

*Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.*