



3600 Market St suite 400, Philadelphia, PA 19104
www.cgfns.org



March 26, 2020

The Honorable Carl Risch
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Consular Affairs
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Risch:

During the current crisis, our critical health workforce needs are becoming apparent. Health professionals, most notably nurses, are the foundation of our healthcare system's efforts to combat the coronavirus crisis. As part of that effort, foreign-educated nurses (FENs) are serving on the frontlines and many more could potentially serve American patients. **I strongly encourage the Department of State to ensure that qualified FENs can expeditiously receive their visas to come and practice their profession in the U.S.**

CGFNS International, Inc. (CGFNS), based in Philadelphia, is the world's largest credentials analysis and skills qualification organization for nurses and allied health professionals. CGFNS was established in 1977 by the American Nurses Association and National League of Nursing to ensure that foreign-educated nurses coming to the U.S. had the knowledge and skills to be licensed in the United States. Since the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996* was passed, Section 343 requires specific healthcare professionals, including registered nurses, to complete a screening program before they can receive an employment-based immigrant visa. CGFNS is the organization designated by federal law to issue *VisaScreen*® certificates for nurses and allied health professions, and by many state licensing boards, to ensure only qualified and skilled foreign-educated nurses and other healthcare professionals are able to obtain licensure to practice their profession in the U.S. and immigrate to this country.

As a result of coronavirus concerns, U.S. embassies and consulates globally have suspended processing routine visas. Because FEN visas are so critical, we request that, wherever possible, FEN visas be processed in a similar manner to other emergency or exceptional requests. In addition, when foreign-educated nurses' EB-3 visas are approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and forwarded to the National Visa Center (NVC), NVC should pre-process those visas as quickly as possible. Keeping consulates available to interview and approve immigrant nurse visa applications in the Philippines and India is of particular importance and would have the largest positive impact on the availability of qualified foreign nurses in the United States.



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Please let me know if you have any questions, and we look forward to a wider discussion of how we can support the State Department's efforts in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Franklin".

Franklin A. Shaffer
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CGFNS International, Inc.

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