MSMS

MICHIGAN STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY

March 12, 2014

MEMO TO: Representative Mike Shirkey, Chair
Michigan House of Representatives
Michigan Competitiveness Committee

FROM: Mouhanad Hammami, M.D., Chair
Michigan State Medical Society
International Medical Graduate Section Governing Council

RE: Michigan Office of New Americans

Good afternoon Chairman Mike Shirkey and members of the Michigan House of Representatives Michigan Competitiveness Committee:

My name is Mouhanad Hammami and I am a practicing physician and the Chair of the Michigan State Medical Society International Medical Graduates Governing Council, a section of the Michigan State Medical Society that represents more than 15,000 physicians from across the state.

Thank you for the opportunity for the MSMS International Medical Graduates (IMGs) to tell our story about why our organization supports Governor Snyder's initiative to open Michigan's doors to the world with the Michigan Office of New Americans. The Michigan State Medical Society has a long history of advocating for international medical graduates. In fact, MSMS was the first state society to create an IMG Section, and was instrumental in the creation of the American Medical Association's IMG Section. IMGs are 26% of the U.S. physician workforce and almost 28% of the physician pipeline (residents and fellows). Additionally, IMGs are well-over 30% of primary care specialties.

Not only do we support Governor Snyder's plans to have a state-sponsored center for visas granted to immigrant investors through EB-2 and EB-5 Visas, but this office provides even further assistance when it comes to international physicians who also require visas to practice medicine in our underserved communities.

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According to the 2012 report by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates, Michigan is one of the top states in America that has the highest J-1 Visa physicians. What do I mean by J-1 Visa Physicians? Each year, the Michigan Department of Community Health acts as the Interested Governmental Agency (IGA) for the Michigan State Conrad 30 Program and may sponsor up to 30 waiver applications for international medical physicians. In exchange for the waiver, the IMG physician makes a commitment of three years of service in an underserved area specializing in primary care. In 2013, the State of Michigan received 56 applicants; however, 26 physicians were denied the waiver due to the limits of the Conrad 30 program.

We understand that some of these issues are federal; however, IMG physicians want to practice, invest, and build their families and medical practices in Michigan. The Michigan Office of New Americans is a great way to offer that additional assistance and provides both equal access and opportunity to make that dream become a reality.

Most recently, Director Bing Goei attended the MSMS IMG Section Governing Council Annual Meeting in East Lansing. We were able to have an open dialogue with regard to the hurdles physicians face here in Michigan for both new comers and current physicians practicing medicine in our communities. It gave us great hope that we would continue to attract future physicians to this state, which we truly love and has provided us with such opportunity to establish our practices, treat our patients, and employ many people with health care jobs.

We want to thank the Michigan House of Representatives Competitiveness Committee for holding this hearing on such an incredibly important issue not only facing our state, but the nation as well. The Michigan State Medical Society International Medical Graduate Section Governing Council looks forward to continuing to be a partner in the reinvention of our great state.