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EXECUTIVE ORDER OPENS DOORS TO TAP IMMIGRANT EXPERTISE IN COMBATting COVID

Denver, CO—Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning welcomes Governor Jared Polis’ recent [Executive Order DD 2020 038](#), which opens opportunities for internationally trained medical professionals to join the medical workforce to help combat COVID-19.

The Executive Order suspends “certain statutory and regulatory requirements to make more professionals available to the healthcare workforce as soon as possible” during COVID-19. As a next step in response to this Executive Order, Colorado’s Department of Regulatory Agencies will hold an emergency rulemaking session to work out the details of temporary licensure to allow medical professionals, including internationally trained medical graduates, who have not completed current Colorado licensure requirements to serve in limited capacities during the emergency.

Approximately 10 percent of Colorado’s population is foreign-born. Of those individuals, nearly 27 percent have a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Immigrants are twice as likely as U.S.-born to work as home health aides and twice as likely to be physicians and surgeons. Nationally, immigrants make up 17 percent of the 12.4 million American doctors, nurses, dentists and others in healthcare occupations. As we see this pandemic grow we quickly will need to have every healthcare professional available.

“While we have witnessed the devastating impact of COVID-19, there has been overwhelming support and desire from our highly-skilled, internationally trained medical professionals who want to help, yet are pitted against complicated and bureaucratic pathways that prevent them from lending their expertise at such a critical time in our nation,” wrote Colorado Welcome Back Program Manager, Carrie Miller. “We are hopeful this will draw attention to a larger conversation about the role internationally trained medical professionals play in Colorado and across the U.S. We commend the heartfelt passion, dedication, and competence of our international medical professionals to treat patients alongside other healthcare workers in Colorado.”

Colorado Welcome Back, by Spring Institute, has served over 1,000 internationally trained healthcare professionals assisting them through the re-licensure process in Colorado. Currently, there are over 450 active participants who have experience as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, medical laboratory technologists, and in countless other clinical roles.

“Now is the time to dispel the negative narrative created around immigrants being a burden on society, when they are on the frontlines at every level. We are excited to see Governor Polis continue to support immigrant communities and giving them an opportunity to use their specialized skill to save lives,” said Mathew Mengesha, Policy Advocate at Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning. “Many of our internationally trained healthcare professionals have worked in conditions far more dangerous and with less equipment; they are already prepared to support in the frontlines against this pandemic.”

As the epidemic grows, more physicians could be exposed to COVID-19, creating more demand for healthcare professionals who need to fill in. According to the [Associated Press](#), Italy has 10% of their healthcare professionals out of work due to testing positive for COVID-19. Before the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, Colorado was facing a shortage of healthcare providers. [In Colorado](#), there are 10.4 open advertised healthcare jobs for each unemployed healthcare worker.

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Colorado Welcome Back by Spring Institute, helps internationally trained healthcare professionals re-establish healthcare careers in Colorado. We seek to build a bridge between the pool of internationally trained health workers living in Colorado and the need for linguistically and culturally competent healthcare providers.

Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning is a nonprofit organization with a mission to empower people and organizations to succeed across languages and cultures. To find out more, visit our website at <http://www.springinstitute.org/> and follow us on [Facebook](#).