

## Upwardly Global Statement of Support for HB 2556

Upwardly Global supports [HB 2556](#), which would expand pathways for eligible international medical graduates (IMGs) to practice in Texas.

For over 20 years, Upwardly Global has been advancing the inclusion of refugee and immigrant professionals into the U.S. workforce. We are the first and longest-serving national organization in that helps these individuals restart their careers and bring their skills and perspectives into the labor market. Though newcomers to the U.S. are more educated than at any other time in our history – 45% of recently-arrived immigrants have at least a bachelor’s degree – over two million college-educated immigrants and refugees are unemployed or underemployed because of the many cultural and structural barriers in the way of regaining their careers.

Upwardly Global’s work in Texas has been growing and includes new government and foundation grants focused on the Houston metro area and an employment and training partnership with one of its most prestigious academic health systems, Memorial Hermann. Approximately one-third of the three dozen healthcare professionals we are currently supporting in Texas were physicians in their home countries. For example, one was a pediatrician and anesthesiologist in Russia; she is currently working in clinical research while trying to match for a medical residency in the U.S.

Texas is home to a significant immigrant population: 4.9 million Texans—one in six of the state’s residents—were born in another country.<sup>1</sup> While immigrant workers make up 22 percent of Texas’ workforce, many remain under or unemployed due to the lack of recognition of credentials from abroad.<sup>2</sup> As of 2019, 112,000 immigrants ages 25 to 64 living in Texas held a bachelor’s degree or higher in medical and health sciences and services; 22,000 of these individuals were underemployed.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, Texas faces critical health care workforce shortages. According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, all primary care specialties are projected to have shortages by 2032.<sup>4</sup> For example, Texas will have a shortage of 3,375 primary care physicians by 2030, a 67 percent increase from 2017.<sup>5</sup> Immigrants and refugees who have backgrounds in

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<sup>1</sup> “Immigrants in Texas.” American Immigration Council, August 6, 2020.

[https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants\\_in\\_texas.pdf](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_texas.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Batalova, Jeanne and Michael Fix “Leveraging the Skills of Immigrant Health-Care Professionals in Illinois and Chicago,” Migration Policy Institute, April 2022. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-health-professionals-illinois>.

<sup>4</sup> “Physician Supply and Demand Projections 2021-2032.” Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). As of May 2022. <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/legislative/2022-Reports/Physician-Supply-and-Demand-Projections-2021-2032.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> “Texas Projections of Supply and Demand for Primary Care Physicians and Psychiatrists, 2017-2030.” Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). July

health care are well-positioned to mitigate these employment gaps. Their in-demand skills and multilingual abilities are crucial to advancing an inclusive workforce: Studies have found that patient outcomes improve when health care teams are more diverse.<sup>6</sup>

If enacted, HB 2556 would help address Texas's health care shortages, ensure a more diverse workforce, and promote more equitable career opportunities for internationally trained immigrants and refugees.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement of support.

*For more information, please contact Rebecca Fishman, Advocacy & Strategic Initiatives Coordinator, at [rfishman@upwardlyglobal.org](mailto:rfishman@upwardlyglobal.org).*

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2018. [https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/chs/hprc/publications/SupplyandDemand\\_PCandPsychiatrists\\_2017-2030.pdf](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/chs/hprc/publications/SupplyandDemand_PCandPsychiatrists_2017-2030.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Gomez, L E, and Patrick Bernet. "Diversity improves performance and outcomes," National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, August 2019. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30765101>.