

Immigrant Workforce Resilience

UnityPoint Health employs around 80 physicians on temporary visas waiting for green cards. These physicians provide vital care in your communities. They are caring for your family, friends and neighbors and are active, contributing community members. Their stories are engaging and full of hope. At UnityPoint Health, people are our sweet spot. Our patients and our team members. They're what we care about most, and why we do what we do.

As part of our federal action list, we are advocating for these amazing physicians and we need your support for immigrant workforce resilience. To remedy the administrative backlog of temporary visas, we strongly encourage the re-introduction and passage of Congressional proposals, like those from the 116th Congress – the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (S.3599 / H.R.6788) and the Conrad 30 Program and Physician Reauthorization Act (S.948/ H.R.2895).



Ratna Priya Gangi, MD

Ratna Priya Gangi, MD is a UnityPoint Health cardiologist serving patients in West Des Moines, Iowa. She has been waiting for permanent residency for 6 years. Her husband, Dr. Prashanth Garshakurthi, MD, also works for UnityPoint Health as a hospitalist and has been waiting on his green card for 9 years. These two amazing physicians are raising two young and active boys, ages 6 and 2, who love to bike and play. She wishes she and her husband could focus on their lives and careers without the burden of permanent residency on their minds.



Dr. Prashanth Garshakurthi, MD

Why is the issue of permanent residency important to you?

Not having a permanent residency makes us vulnerable to the frequent changes in the H1B visa policies. Even our driver's license is only issued until the validity of our visa date. Application for visa extension takes almost 6 to 8 months. This is a period of great uncertainty which we undergo very frequently. **This inhibits us from feeling secure.**

Many of our patients travel from rural areas to see us and they always ask if we are going to be here for their one year follow up. **We need to provide a sense of stability** for the physician-patient relationship. That relationship is based on trust over a period of time. They need to know their physician will be there for them at the next appointment and I can't provide that answer with certainty.

What worries you most related to temporary visa restrictions/implications?

That the government could suddenly make a rule that they will not renew the visas for a certain time period. If that makes me or my husband out of status, **we will have to leave the country.**

“ My children are born and raised here. Uprooting them from an environment they are familiar with and having to start all over again abruptly is a matter of great concern. ”

Why did you go into medicine, specifically your specialty of cardiology?

The heart is an amazing organ, it beats relentlessly throughout our life and never gives up. It is amazing how it recovers after major heart attacks and keeps going no matter what.

I have a strong family history in this space. Both my grandfather and father died at a young age due to cardiac and blood diseases. Had they been affected a few years later, they would have stood a chance because of advances in medicine and treatments. I wanted to be a part of bringing those advancements to my patients.

KEY STATISTICS

- ★ **78** UnityPoint Health physicians are currently on H1B status.
- ★ In 2019, more than **95,000** UnityPoint Clinic visits occurred with these physicians. About every 1 in 10 clinic visits that year.
- ★ They practice in **12** medical specialties as well as in family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics.
- ★ These specialists serve in the critical areas of pulmonology, infectious disease and hospitalist care which were vital during COVID-19. They provided care for **39%** of clinic Pulmonology visits in 2019 and **36%** of Infectious Disease visits. More than **25** of our hospitalists are on H1B visa status.

For more information about UnityPoint Health's position on Immigrant Workforce Resilience, please contact:

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UnityPoint Health