

# Impact REPORT

## Building an Inclusive Healthcare Workforce

**In the U.S. there is a growing crisis: a shortage of healthcare professionals** in hospitals and medical facilities across the country. Since 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the limits of medical systems, healthcare workers from all backgrounds — including **many professionally licensed immigrants, refugees, and asylees** — have stepped in to fill gaps.

There are approximately **270,000** underemployed or unemployed immigrant and refugee health professionals

The U.S. faces a projected shortage of up to **124,000** physicians by 2034

Despite their expertise and overwhelming desire to contribute, **many internationally trained healthcare professionals are forced to remain on the sidelines** during health crises. But the U.S. is facing a projected shortage of 124,000 physicians by 2034; **efforts to allow this group of talented, compassionate, and qualified professionals to relicense and restart their careers** are needed now more than ever to help fill this healthcare gap.

To help unleash the potential of these newcomers, Upwardly Global works in coalition with partners and in select state legislatures and hospital systems to advocate for sustainable pathways for internationally trained health professionals to be licensed and practice in their fields. We also lift up the stories and support policy priorities that can build the healthcare field and shift systems to advance inclusion. Most recently, Upwardly Global's advocacy and coalition-building contributed to **Illinois passing legislation that helps eliminate licensing barriers for internationally trained doctors** to practice medicine in the state, creating a permanent alternative pathway to full licensure. At the federal level, Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

recently introduced three bills in the House of Representatives focused on internationally trained healthcare professionals in the U.S. workforce; **Upwardly Global is pleased to endorse these bills.**

Upwardly Global is committed to supporting the career paths of immigrant, refugee, and asylee healthcare professionals. Our **returnship program with NewYork-Presbyterian** that on-ramps immigrant professionals into open jobs in the healthcare sector has been a success and will be replicated with another major academic medical center system thanks to generous **funding from the Truist Foundation.**

We are proud to support the thousands of newcomers seeking to restart their healthcare careers in the U.S. Together, we can create new opportunities for these professionals and fill labor shortages to get this untapped talent off the sidelines.

Sincerely,



**Jina Krause-Vilmar**  
CEO and President

**Internationally trained healthcare workers** in America have long faced barriers to working in their fields. Approximately 270,000 immigrants, refugees, and asylees in the U.S. have healthcare backgrounds, and yet they are too often relegated to low-wage jobs that do not utilize their specialized skills and experience. Many are sidelined by licensing and certification rules that fail to recognize their expertise and require costly and time-consuming examinations and residencies in a system that overwhelmingly favors U.S. applicants.

Upwardly Global supports both job seekers who want to relicense and those who want to pursue alternative pathways. With a particular expertise in supporting international medical graduates (IMGs), who were physicians in their home countries, Upwardly Global works to ensure that critical information about relicensing is accessible through [online licensing guides](#). And for those pursuing alternative career pathways, Upwardly Global provides industry-specific coaching and support to match job seekers in other healthcare and medical industry roles, such as



clinical research, that allows individuals to leverage their training and knowledge without relicensing.

In addition to career coaching, Upwardly Global partners with legislators, regulators, healthcare providers, and grassroots and national organizations in key states to advocate for sustainable solutions. Forward-thinking healthcare systems such as NewYork-Presbyterian are partnering with Upwardly Global on paid internships and other programs that aim to steer newcomers into healthcare roles where their experience and talents are utilized.

## BY THE NUMBERS

# Upwardly Global's impact



**850+**  
**HEALTHCARE  
JOB SEEKERS  
SUPPORTED**

by Upwardly Global programming with 730 placed in full-time roles and 120 matched for residency positions



**50+**  
**JOB SEEKERS  
HIRED**

by NewYork- Presbyterian in returnship program and full time roles, over one-third began in returnship roles and grew into permanent roles



**24+**  
**STATES CONSIDERING  
LEGISLATION AND  
PROGRAMMING**

to support internationally trained medical professionals in the U.S. Upwardly Global works in coalition with World Education Services (WES) and other partners to advance the inclusion of these immigrants into the healthcare workforce

## CASE STUDY

# The New York-Presbyterian “Returnship” Program

In 2021, Upwardly Global co-designed and launched with New York-Presbyterian (NYP), one of the most prestigious academic medical centers in the country, a paid mid-career internship program with the goal to on-ramp internationally-trained immigrants into open roles in the healthcare sector. **The returnship program** addresses hospital staffing needs with a new, diverse pool of talent and offers healthcare career pathways for immigrants with international credentials and experience.

In the pilot year, the program engaged Upwardly Global job seekers with backgrounds in healthcare into paid returnships at New York-Presbyterian. All returnship candidates received support from Upwardly Global’s Career

security, access to a professional network, exposure to U.S. workplace norms and expectations in their industry, and the potential for full-time employment within the NYP system. In a mutually beneficial partnership, both Upwardly Global participants and NYP help advance the inclusion of newcomers in the U.S. workforce and healthcare system.

A **grant from the Truist Foundation** will support additional efforts to proactively connect internationally trained immigrant and refugee job seekers with in-demand careers in the healthcare sector. The grant enables Upwardly Global to further develop alternative career pathways for low-income immigrants in healthcare industry-aligned roles, building on the “returnship” model, piloted with New York-Presbyterian. By enlisting more employer partners in the healthcare sector, Upwardly Global will help create clear pathways to healthcare careers, including research and medical writing. The Truist Foundation grant also supports the creation of new resources for immigrant and refugee job seekers in healthcare fields, including micro-courses and a “recruitment playbook.”

*“We strive every day to ensure that all New Yorkers have ready access to the exceptional care we deliver in communities across our city. Our partnership with Upwardly Global allows us to tap into a unique pool of highly talented professionals who, from day one, are eager and ready to help us realize that mission.”*

—Dr. Steven J. Corwin, President and CEO of New York-Presbyterian

Coaching Program — gaining access to a career coach who helps navigate the U.S. healthcare job market and provides resume support and interview prep. Upwardly Global coaches also work with recruiters to match candidates against hiring needs for the returnships and beyond, with the goal of finding job seekers permanent employment opportunities.

The returnship program engages job seekers who are rebuilding their healthcare careers in the U.S. through ongoing upskilling and/or credentialing and are open to lower level and skill aligned with opportunities for growth. Program participants are able to fill crucial roles in the New York-Presbyterian system that can support their ongoing professional journeys. With a returnship, job seekers gain financial



*“This is for me a huge opportunity to be able to help the community in which I am living. There is a tiny group of physicians coming from abroad who become a doctor here, and we don’t want to have people coming here with degrees and not able to have an impact. Upwardly Global is like that engine who can help you push to get where you want to.”*

—Jacky, Haitian doctor and Upwardly Global participant in the New York-Presbyterian returnship program

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

**Momentum for health licensing reform** has been growing at the state and national levels. To help internationally trained newcomers overcome employment barriers that relegate them to the sidelines, Upwardly Global works in partnership with legislators, regulators, healthcare providers, and grassroots national organizations, like **World Education Services (WES)** and The International Medical Graduates Academy, to advocate for sustainable pathways to relicensing.

Through education and coalition building, Upwardly Global supports longer-term solutions to amend current licensing processes with the goal of securing more newcomers in healthcare roles that match their skill sets and education. It's a win-win solution for state and federal healthcare capacity, for immigrant workers, and for the many Americans in need of medical care.

The U.S. government has the opportunity to put reforms and support in place to promote the inclusion of internationally trained medical and healthcare professionals in the U.S. workforce. At the state level, key wins in Washington, Massachusetts, Colorado, and Illinois (**SB1298** and **HB2948**) have created easier pathways to relicensing,

allowing more newcomers the opportunity to reenter the healthcare field.

In 2023, Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.) introduced the Immigrants in Nursing and Allied Health Act, the International Medical Graduate (IMG) Assistance Act, and the Professional's Access to Health (PATH) Workforce Integration Act in the U.S. House. **These three bills would help eliminate key barriers that prevent immigrants from entering the healthcare field in the United States.** On the heels of our relicensing win in Illinois, Upwardly Global applauds Rep. Smith for introducing this critical legislation package and his efforts to help build a more equitable and resilient healthcare system.

**Ihor** spent over eight years obtaining his medical license in neurology and gained valuable experience providing care in his home country of Ukraine. However, when he relocated to the U.S. in 2017, his international licensing wasn't recognized. Despite successfully passing the required licensing exams, Ihor spent years applying to residency programs with no luck. With support from his Upwardly Global career coach, Ihor found research experience to strengthen his applications and received guidance on resume improvement and interview skills with a special focus on immigrants in the medical field. In 2022, after building up his skills in the neurology research field, Ihor applied for medical residency again. During interview season, Upwardly Global connected him with current medical residents for mock interviews. In 2023, Ihor matched with Berkshire Medical Center, an affiliate of the University of Massachusetts, achieving his goal of a medical residency. Read Ihor's full story here.



SPOTLIGHT



**Illinois Takes Bold Step To Reduce Doctor Shortages: Upwardly Global-Backed Legislation Creates Alternative Pathway to Full Licensure**

[LEARN MORE](#)

**Upwardly Global Announces New Guides to Relicensing for Internationally Trained Healthcare Workers**

[LEARN MORE](#)

**Upwardly Global Endorses Legislation to Help Immigrants Enter Healthcare Professions**

[LEARN MORE](#)