

12 YEARS IN THE MAKING: ONE NURSE'S JOURNEY TO THE U.S. DEMONSTRATES WHY WE NEED STREAMLINED IMMIGRATION POLICIES

Christian's nursing career spans three different countries, but he always dreamed of working and living in the United States. After 12 years of practicing as a nurse in both the Philippines and Singapore, his dream came true after securing a job at Duke Health. Now, Christian is sharing his story to shed light on the realities foreign-educated nurses face when trying to move to the U.S. and why it's important to enhance immigration policies that will reduce red tape and encourage more international professionals to fill gaps in the U.S. healthcare workforce.

CHRISTIAN'S NURSING JOURNEY

Christian first knew he wanted to become a nurse during high school. Even though he lived in Nueva Ecija, a northern province located on the island of Luzon in the Philippines, he also knew he wanted to work in the U.S. one day, fully aware of the challenges and lengthy process involved in fulfilling his dream.

After practicing for almost five years at a provincial community hospital in the Philippines, he moved to Singapore, where he practiced for another seven years. After 12 years in the field, an opportunity to immigrate to the U.S. arose when American hospitals were facing critical staffing shortages in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Christian began the process of obtaining the required credentials with help from a U.S.-based staffing agency. He took his NCLEX licensing exam and successfully passed on his first attempt, giving him the credential needed to practice as a registered nurse and begin his career in America.



SUCCESS IN THE U.S.

After connecting with PRS Global, a global sourcing and placement company for healthcare professionals, Christian applied and interviewed for an EB-3 employment visa and eventually secured a position at Duke University Hospital, where he still works on the orthopedic trauma unit. With over 300 fellow international nurses at his hospital, Christian works alongside a team of foreign-educated nurses who together provide high-quality patient care and support American nurses on the ground who are overburdened and stressed out due to staffing gaps.

PRS Global provided extensive support for Christian and his family to adjust to life in America, including help setting up an apartment, bank accounts, and phone lines. After

working overtime for two years to save for a down payment, Christian's family achieved their American dream and purchased a home of their own. He says he feels safe living in the U.S. and is grateful for the opportunities it has afforded himself, his wife, and his daughter.

THE NURSING SHORTAGE IN THE U.S.

While the U.S. is working diligently to educate more nurses to fill the workforce pipeline, capacity constraints mean that the U.S. cannot produce nurses quickly enough to meet the rising demand for care. Although the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts about 194,500 openings for registered nurses each year over the next decade, U.S. nursing schools are not producing enough nurses to fill this need. In 2024 alone, over 80,000 qualified applications were turned away from U.S. nursing schools because of faculty shortages, a lack of clinical sites, and limited classroom space. Creating more efficient pathways for foreign-educated nurses to enter the U.S. workforce is essential to secure a stable future for our healthcare system.

NEXT STEPS

Countless nurses from across the globe have stories and dreams like Christian's. By facilitating and streamlining the process of immigrating to the U.S. for skilled and trained professionals, policymakers can help fill gaps in our workforce so that patients can receive more timely, high-quality care. Not only will their integration into the U.S. healthcare system mean better care for patients, but it will also lift up and support the existing workforce on the ground, who data show is struggling to meet patient demand and facing high levels of burnout.



Thank you to PRS Global for contributing this powerful case study to the Healthcare Workforce Coalition.

CONGRESS: SUPPORT PATHWAYS FOR FOREIGN-EDUCATED HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS TO ENTER THE AMERICAN WORKFORCE.

Address Significant Workforce Shortages In Our Nation's Healthcare System by Enabling More Nurses Like Christian To Work In The U.S.