



**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE**

April 14, 1998

H.R. 2759

Health Professional Shortage Area Nursing Relief Act of 1998

As ordered reported by the House Committee on the Judiciary on March 24, 1998

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 2759 would have a negligible net impact on the federal budget. Enacting H.R. 2759 would affect direct spending and receipts, so pay-as-you-go procedures would apply. However, we estimate that the amounts involved would be much less than \$500,000 a year. This legislation contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995.

H.R. 2759 would establish a new nonimmigrant category for nurses who would work in areas of the United States with shortages of health professionals. The bill would provide 500 nonimmigrant visas annually over the next four years, and recipients could stay in the United States for three years. Fees charged for these visas would range from \$50 to \$155, depending on the current immigration status of the applicant. Thus, enacting the bill could increase the amount of fees collected by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) by between \$25,000 and \$75,000 annually if all 500 visas are granted. The INS would spend the fees (without appropriation action), mostly in the year in which they are collected, so enacting H.R. 2759 would result in at most a negligible net budgetary impact on annual spending by the INS.

The bill would require the Department of Labor (DOL) to charge fees of up to \$250 to facilities that file applications to hire immigrant nurses. This provision would result in the collection of fees totaling between \$15,000 and \$50,000 annually, assuming all visas are granted and petitioning facilities apply to hire more than one worker. Spending of fees collected by DOL would be subject to appropriation actions.

In addition, the bill would increase civil monetary penalties for violations of certain laws relating to the hiring of nonimmigrant nurses. This action could result in the collection of additional receipts, but we estimate that any such amounts would be less than \$500,000 per year.

By creating a new nonimmigrant visa program for nurses, the bill would allow certain health facilities, some of them operated by state and local public agencies, to increase the number of nurses they employ. In order to participate, these facilities would have to satisfy criteria established in the bill and pay the fee to DOL as described above. However, their participation in the program would be voluntary.

The CBO staff contacts are Mark Grabowicz (for INS costs), Christi H. Sadoti (for DOL costs), and Leo Lex (for the state and local impact). This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.