

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE WHITE HOUSE, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE

July 8, 2020

On behalf of the educational and scientific societies listed below, representing STEM professionals in all fields, both in the US and internationally, ***we respectfully request that plans announced by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on July 6, 2020 to modify the exemption to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) be withdrawn immediately.*** The proposed modifications would prohibit non-immigrant students from remaining in the United States if all classes are online as a result of COVID-19. Implementation of the ICE SEVP modifications could severely impact the nearly 1.6 million students currently in the US under SEVP by causing vast numbers of students to potentially be deported.

Coupled with recent Executive Orders and Presidential Proclamations, we are gravely concerned that this latest proposed ICE action will not only cost the US the current cohort of future innovators now enrolled in US schools, but could permanently destroy one of America's main competitive advantages: our ability to attract the world's best and brightest to study here, work here, and ultimately create America's industries and jobs of the future. Particularly in this time of almost unprecedented economic challenges, deporting students is an experiment the nation simply cannot afford to conduct.

In late 2018, Forbes Magazine published the dramatic research findings of a study by the non-partisan National Foundation for American Policy¹:

America's ability to attract international students fosters entrepreneurship. About 23% (21 of 91) of the billion-dollar startup companies had a founder who first came to America as an international student. . . . The research finds that among these privately held billion-dollar startup companies, immigrant founders have created an average of more than 1,200 jobs per company.

Leadership in global scientific and technological research requires the talents, skills, and ideas of STEM professionals from different backgrounds and cultures, and with different experiences and perspectives. Indeed, the US became the world leader in many areas of science and technology during the last century in part because of the diversity of individuals who contributed to those disciplines. Such diversity continues to drive the US economy today and will assure our global competitiveness tomorrow.

International students comprise a majority of doctoral candidates in many STEM fields. Not only do these students contribute to America's research enterprise but, given their prevalence in

¹ <https://nfap.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2018-BILLION-DOLLAR-STARTUPS.NFAP-Policy-Brief.2018-1.pdf>

graduate programs, international students are critical to supporting efforts to nurture and develop the talents of thousands of American students.

In order for the US to continue to be a STEM leader, however, we must maintain a robust visa program open to all nations. We call upon ICE to reconsider the unintended impact of crippling this program and, with it, the high-powered, education-driven engine of America's unparalleled innovation economy.

America's economy and prosperity have been and remain inextricably tied to our hospitality and diversity. Now, more than ever, is the time to honor, embrace, and extend that legacy by assuring that all those now studying here may continue to do so under the SEVP for both their benefit and our nation's.

Respectfully submitted,

American Anthropological Association
American Association for Anatomy
American Association for Dental Research
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Geographers
American Association of Immunologists
American Association of Physicists in Medicine
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Astronomical Society
American Chemical Society
American Geophysical Union
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Mathematical Society
American Meteorological Society
American Oil Chemists' Society
American Physical Society
American Physiological Society
American Psychological Association
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Cell Biology
American Society for Gravitational and Space Research
American Society for Investigative Pathology
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Society of Human Genetics
American Society of Landscape Architects
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Statistical Association
American Thoracic Society

AnitaB.org
Association for Psychological Science
Association for Women in Mathematics
Association for Women in Science
Association of Population Centers
Association of Science and Technology Centers
Biomedical Engineering Society
Biophysical Society
Coalition for the Life Sciences
Computing Research Association
Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences
Council on Undergraduate Research
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Federation of American Scientists
Geological Society of America
Institute of Food Technologists
Institute of Mathematical Statistics
Institute of Transportation Engineers
International Society for Magnetic Resonance in Medicine
International Society for Stem Cell Research
Mathematical Association of America
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
OSA-The Optical Society
Population Association of America
Research!America
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics
Society for Neuroscience
Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
SPIE, the International Society for Optics and Photonics
STEM Education Coalition
The Minerals, Metals & Materials Society

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