President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20001

June 15th, 2020

Dear Mr. President,

Re: Review of non-immigrant programs subject to Section 6 of Proclamation Suspending Entry of Immigrants who Present Risk to the U.S. Labor Market during the Economic Recovery Following the COVID-19 Outbreak.

We are writing on behalf of students and student governments at 72 universities to highlight the crucial role America’s strength in the global postsecondary education market has on our nation’s economic growth and research enterprise. Our leadership in this market manifests in our continued ability to attract the best and the brightest students from around the world to our colleges and universities. One significant draw for this global talent is the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program, which has enjoyed decades of broad bipartisan support and offers talented international students who complete a U.S. degree the opportunity to temporarily remain in the country to enhance their educational experience and contribute to our economy.

We recognize that the administration is reviewing the OPT program as it examines additional actions following the April 22 executive order, “Proclamation Suspending Entry of Immigrants who Present Risk to the U.S. Labor Market during the Economic Recovery Following the COVID-19 Outbreak.” Section 6 instructs the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to review non-immigrant programs and recommend measures to stimulate the economy and prioritize the hiring and employment of U.S. workers. We **strongly urge you to maintain the OPT program and the STEM OPT extension in their entirety, as suspending or limiting them would hurt the U.S. economy, American workers, and American innovation.**

International students contributed nearly $45 billion to the U.S. economy in 2018-2019 alone and supported more than 450,000 jobs.¹ They serve as essential instructors and teaching assistants to students and are thus fundamental to the postsecondary education system. Yet their enrollment numbers have seen a decline in recent years (from 300,743 in 2015-16 to 269,383 in 2018-19),² while universities in Canada,³ Australia,⁴ and the UK⁵ have seen a record increase. If the OPT program is suspended or limited, these numbers may fall even further.

There is a shortage of domestic workers to fill high-skilled 21st century jobs, as was found by a report commissioned by the Ronald Reagan Foundation⁶ and also echoed by a bipartisan group of Congressional

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Representatives.\textsuperscript{7,8} International students fill these critical skills gaps in our economy, and access to skilled employees further allows businesses to expand, creating even more jobs. \textbf{Without the OPT program, in the next decade the country could lose 443,000 jobs, including 255,000 jobs held by native-born workers, causing an increase in American unemployment.}\textsuperscript{9} Furthermore, unemployment rates have been lower in areas with larger numbers of students working as part of OPT.\textsuperscript{10} As international students seek education elsewhere—in the U.K., Canada or Australia, all of whom are racing to ease their visa restrictions—these jobs will remain unfilled, putting a strain on American scientific enterprise which would in turn hinder our efforts to respond to COVID-19, threaten our standing as a global leader in science and technology, and slow economic growth.

Immigrants and especially foreign students are a driving force behind the innovation and technology that make the U.S. a great nation. A quarter of entrepreneurs in America are immigrants, and in 2018, nearly 44\% of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children.\textsuperscript{11} Currently, 90\% of international graduate students from China and 83\% from India remain in the U.S. after graduation, where they start businesses, file patents, and develop American intellectual property to ensure American competitiveness in global R&D. Recognizing this, the Reagan Foundation report also called for easing visa restrictions so these students could stay in the U.S. after completion of their degree programs and contribute their talents to the long-term benefit of American economy. Without the OPT program or the STEM OPT extension, more of these students trained and educated in American universities would return to their home countries, and all of their entrepreneurship and innovations would benefit those countries instead of the United States.

\textbf{Suspending or limiting the OPT program or the STEM OPT extension will make it harder for U.S. citizens to find jobs, hurt the U.S. economy, and hand other countries our competitive edge of new businesses and technologies.} We urge you to maintain the OPT program in its entirety. We appreciate your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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CMU Graduate Student Assembly  
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\textsuperscript{8} Letter by Rep. Steve Stivers and 20 other Members of Congress to Secretary of State and Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, (2020, June 2). \textit{Regarding benefits of the OPT program and the need to preserve it}.

\textsuperscript{9} Business Roundtable. (2018). \textit{The Economic Impact Of Curbing The Optional Practical Training Program}.


\textsuperscript{11} See Business Roundtable (2018).
On behalf of:

Baylor University Graduate Student Association
Brandeis University Graduate Student Association
Brown University Graduate Student Council
Caltech Graduate Student Council
Carnegie Mellon University Graduate Student Assembly and Undergraduate Student Senate
Case Western Reserve University Graduate Student Council
Graduate Student Government, Colorado School of Mines
Cornell Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY’s Graduate Student Council
Dartmouth University Graduate Student Council
Drexel University Graduate Student Association
Duke University Graduate and Professional Student Council
Fordham Graduate Student Association
Georgia Tech Graduate Student Government Association
Harvard University GSAS Student Council
Graduate and Professional Student Senate Executive Committee, Iowa State University
Louisiana State University Graduate Students’ Council
Massachusetts Institute of Technology Graduate Student Council and Undergraduate Association
Miami University Graduate Student Association
Graduate Student Government of Michigan Technological University
New York University, Student Government Assembly
Northeastern University Graduate Student Government
Ohio State University Council of Graduate Students
Graduate and Professional Student Government Association, Oklahoma State University
Pacific University Professional Student Senate
Penn State Graduate and Professional Student Association
Graduate Student Government of Princeton University
Rice University Graduate and Undergraduate Student Associations
Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science Graduate Student Association
Rutgers Graduate Student Association
Rutgers University-Newark Graduate Student Governing Association
Graduate Student Council at Stevens Institute of Technology
Syracuse University Graduate Student Organization
Graduate Student Organization, The University of Louisiana at Lafayette
The University of Texas at Austin Graduate Student Assembly
University of Arizona, Graduate and Professional Student Council
University of Arkansas at Fayetteville Graduate-Professional Student Congress
Graduate Student Association of University of Arkansas Little Rock
University of California, Davis Graduate Student Association
Associated Graduate Students of University of California, Irvine
University of California, Los Angeles Graduate Student Association
University of California, San Diego Graduate Student Association Executive Committee
University of Chicago Graduate Council
University of Colorado Boulder United Government of Graduate Students
Graduate Student Senate, University of Connecticut
University of Delaware Graduate Student Government
University of Florida Graduate Student Council
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Graduate Student Organization
Graduate and Professional Student Association, University of Idaho
University of Illinois at Chicago Graduate Student Council
University of Kansas Medical Center Graduate Student Council Executive Committee
University of Louisville Graduate Student Council
University of Maryland Baltimore Graduate Student Association
University of Maryland College Park Graduate Student Government
University of Massachusetts Lowell Graduate Student Association
University of Miami Graduate Student Association
University of Michigan Rackham Student Government and Rackham Graduate International
Graduate & Professional Student Association, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
University of New Hampshire Graduate Student Senate
University of New Mexico Graduate and Professional Student Association
Graduate and Professional Student Federation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of North Carolina Charlotte Graduate and Professional Student Government
University of Notre Dame, Graduate Student Union Executive Board
University of Oklahoma Graduate Student Senate
University of Pennsylvania Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
University of Pittsburgh Graduate & Professional Student Government
University of Rochester Arts, Sciences & Engineering Graduate Student Association
University of Rochester Medical Center Graduate Student Society
University of Southern California Graduate Student Government
University of Vermont Graduate Student Senate
Vanderbilt University Graduate Student Council
Graduate & Professional Student Association, Washington State University

CC:
The Honorable Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State
The Honorable Chad Wolf, Acting Secretary of Homeland Security
The Honorable Eugene Scalia, Secretary of Labor
The Honorable Kelvin Droegemeier, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
The Honorable Mick Mulvaney, Director, White House Office of Management and Budget
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, United States Senate
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Minority Leader, United States Senate
The Honorable Lindsey Graham, Chair, Senate Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Ron Johnson, Chair, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
The Honorable Gary Peters, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chair, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Jerrold Nadler, Chair, House Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Mary Gay Scanlon, Vice-Chair, House Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Doug Collins, Ranking Member, House Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, Chair, Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship, House Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Ken Buck, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship, House Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Chair, House Committee on Homeland Security
The Honorable Mike Rogers, Ranking Member, House Committee on Homeland Security
The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chair, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
The Honorable Frank Lucas, Ranking Member, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
The Honorable Haley Stevens, Chair, Subcommittee on Research & Technology, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
The Honorable Jim Baird, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Research & Technology, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
The Honorable Bobby Scott, Chair, House Committee on Education and Labor
The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member, House Committee on Education and Labor
The Honorable Susan Davis, Chair, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment, House Committee on Education and Labor
The Honorable Lloyd Smucker, Chair, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment, House Committee on Education and Labor
The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations