

May 22, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE  
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Russ Vought  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 Seventeenth Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Secretary Mullin and Director Vought:

As Members of Congress committed to bolstering domestic innovation, we are concerned about the proposed changes to Duration of Status (D/S) for international students, scholars, and exchange visitors on F-1 and J-1 visas. While we share your commitment to protecting American jobs and students, we respectfully request that you preserve the current framework as part of our government's efforts to advance American economic competitiveness and global leadership.

For decades, the D/S framework has provided international students and academic institutions with the flexibility necessary to support long-term study, research, and workforce development in the United States. Under the current system, F-1 and J-1 visa holders may remain in the country for as long as they comply with the terms of their admission. Educational and research timelines vary significantly across disciplines, and in many STEM fields, doctoral programs exceed six years.

Replacing D/S with a capped admission period of four years would require many students to seek repeated extensions, creating unnecessary administrative burdens, processing delays, and disruptions to academic continuity. These changes would undermine America's ability to attract and retain top global talent at a time when competitor nations continue expanding efforts to recruit international students, researchers, and high-skilled STEM workers. Recent surveys found that nearly half of international graduate students and postdoctoral researchers would not have chosen to study in the United States if it had a fixed admission period.<sup>1</sup> We support expanding STEM education in American schools, but it will take years to ensure that our students can fill the employment gaps left by changing D/S. An all-of-the-above solution, which encompasses strengthening American STEM training and a maintaining the existing D/S framework is therefore critical to cementing the U.S.'s innovation leadership.

International students play a key role in driving U.S. competitiveness in advanced manufacturing, medical research, and other emerging technologies. Temporary visa holders earn a substantial share of U.S. doctoral degrees in engineering, computer science, mathematics, and

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<sup>1</sup> Institute for Progress, "Surveys on International Talent Pipelines," 2025, <https://ifp.org/wp-content/uploads/2025-Surveys-on-International-Talent-Pipelines-1.pdf>.

physics, helping fill workforce shortages in sectors critical to U.S. economic and national security. Many remain in the United States and contribute directly to strategically important industries. If we evict them, they will return home to help foreign companies— in countries like China— compete against us.

Maintaining D/S is also vital in our efforts to strengthen domestic talent pipelines and local economies. Because international students are generally ineligible for federal financial aid and often pay full tuition, they help sustain academic programs, expand institutional capacity, and support educational opportunities for American students. In fact, for every international student enrolled at a U.S. public university, two additional American students are able to attend.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, they contribute approximately \$43 billion annually to local economies and support more than 355,000 American jobs across the country.<sup>3</sup> Building American businesses, goods, and job pipelines requires a team of vetted international scholars, students, and citizens who share a commitment to protecting and expanding America's economic and technological prowess. Implementing a four-year cap would greatly diminish these advances.

If the United States experiences even a one-third decline in foreign STEM graduates, the country could lose 6 to 11 percent of its high-skilled STEM workforce. Economic research estimates that such a decline could reduce the U.S. GDP by \$240 to \$481 billion annually within a decade— creating fewer new businesses and jobs, reducing global competitiveness, and shrinking tax revenues that support public services and infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

According to DHS documents, the proposed rule seeks to improve program oversight and prevent foreign adversaries from exploiting the country's universities.<sup>5</sup> Yet international students remain among the most thoroughly vetted and continuously monitored nonimmigrant populations. The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) provides DHS with continuous, real-time monitoring of international students and exchange visitors, and a fixed admission period would not meaningfully enhance those capabilities. Oversight and compliance

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<sup>2</sup> Chen, "Ed Exports," *EdWorkingPaper*, v3, [https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/Chen\\_EdExports\\_EdWorkingPaper%20v3.pdf](https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/Chen_EdExports_EdWorkingPaper%20v3.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> NAFSA, "International Student Economic Value Tool," <https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool-v2>.

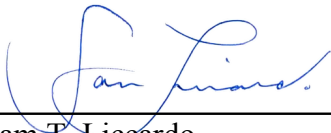
<sup>4</sup> Clemens, Neufeld, and Nice, "Brain Freeze," Working Paper, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, [https://nap.nationalacademies.org/resource/29283/BrainFreeze\\_Working\\_Paper\\_Clemens-Neufeld-Nice.pdf](https://nap.nationalacademies.org/resource/29283/BrainFreeze_Working_Paper_Clemens-Neufeld-Nice.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> "Establishing a Fixed Time Period of Admission and an Extension of Stay Procedure for Nonimmigrant Academic Students, Exchange Visitors, and Representatives of Foreign Information Media," 90 Fed. Reg. (Aug. 28, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/08/28/2025-16554/establishing-a-fixed-time-period-of-admission-and-an-extension-of-stay-procedure-for-nonimmigrant>.

concerns can and should be addressed through targeted measures that avoid overhauling the entire D/S system.

We respectfully ask you to preserve Duration of Status and ensure efficient visa processing policies that support a stable environment for international students and scholars. Doing so will help ensure that the United States remains the world's leading destination for higher education, scientific research, and innovation while strengthening long-term economic competitiveness and workforce capacity.

Sincerely,



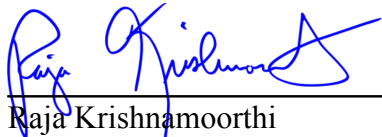
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Sam T. Liccardo  
Member of Congress



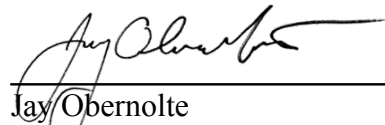
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María Elvira Salazar  
Member of Congress



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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



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Jay Obernolte  
Member of Congress