October 6, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane, SW  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

We are writing to express our concern regarding the September 25, 2020 proposed rule that would arbitrarily limit international student visa lengths and place additional restrictions on student visas based on an individual’s country of origin. These changes in policy place additional burdens on students and universities, further disincentivizing prospective international students from attending U.S. institutions of higher education. International students are a critical part of colleges and universities across the country, and this proposed rule would undermine our nation’s leadership in higher education and research.

Currently, most international student visas are valid for the duration of status, which allows international students to remain in the United States if they remain enrolled in an institution of higher education while abiding by rules relevant to their immigration status. This proven system provides flexibility for both four-year degrees and doctoral programs that may require additional time to complete.

The proposed rule replaces this longstanding policy with a fixed, four-year visa. This would be further reduced to just two years for students who were born in Iran, North Korea, Sudan or Syria, regardless of their citizenship, as well as citizens of those countries. This rule also uses a flawed methodology to limit citizens of countries with certain visa overstay rates, disproportionately impacting students from countries that send smaller numbers of international students. Furthermore, the proposed rule would arbitrarily limit the number of times students can change programs at the same degree level and impose intrusive mandates that would allow Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials to arbitrarily make determinations traditionally left to academic institutions.

These proposed changes, if enacted, would place at risk the academic careers of the over 1 million international students who attend U.S. institutes of higher education each year. These students play a fundamental role in our nation’s academic and campus life. Their contributions are critical to maintaining the United States’ leadership in STEM fields and cutting-edge technologies like machine learning and artificial intelligence. These rules would also threaten the hundreds of thousands of jobs supported by international students, as well as the tens of billions of dollars in economic activity that these students facilitate each year.
International students remain a key part of the higher education ecosystem. They enrich the higher education experience for all students and provide meaningful contributions to our country. The proposed rule places needless restrictions on these students and fundamentally threatens a cornerstone of our nation’s higher education system. With this mind, we urge you to rescind these changes to duration of status of F, J, and I visa holders and maintain the current duration of status policy.

We must ensure the United States welcomes and fosters international students who are vital to our economy and continue to provide meaningful contributions to research, culture, academic life, and our country.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

/s/  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress

/s/  
David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress
Susan Wild  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

Ed Case  
Member of Congress

Mike Levin  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress

John Garamendi  
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

James Langevin  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
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Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib  
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Katherine Clark  
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Ruben Gallego  
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/s/ Derek Kilmer
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/s/ Karen Bass
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/s/ Peter A. DeFazio
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/s/ Ami Bera, M.D.
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/s/ Grace F. Napolitano
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/s/ David E. Price
Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Panetta
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/s/ Mikie Sherrill
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/s/ Dave Loebsack
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/s/ Suzan K. DelBene
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/s/ Mark Takano
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/s/ Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

/s/ Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress

/s/ J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

/s/ Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress

/s/ José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

/s/ A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

/s/ Greg Stanton
Member of Congress

/s/ Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress
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<td>Mark DeSaulnier</td>
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