

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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.

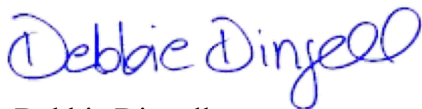
These proposed changes, if enacted, would place at risk the academic careers of the over 1 million international students who attend U.S. institutes of higher education each year. These students play a fundamental role in our nation's academic and campus life. Their contributions are critical to maintaining 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



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/
Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

/s/
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/
Mike Doyle
Member of Congress

/s/
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

/s/
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

/s/
Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

/s/
Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress

/s/
Susan Wild
Member of Congress

/s/
Ed Case
Member of Congress

/s/
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

/s/
John Garamendi
Member of Congress

/s/
Grace Meng
Member of Congress

/s/
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

/s/
Katherine Clark
Member of Congress

/s/
Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress

/s/
Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

/s/
Jim Cooper
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Ro Khanna
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Jamie Raskin
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Mike Levin
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Doris Matsui
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Alan Lowenthal
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James Langevin
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Eddie Bernice Johnson
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Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

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Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
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Susan A. Davis
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Lori Trahan
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Seth Moulton
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Peter Welch
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Chellie Pingree
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Andy Levin
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Judy Chu
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Daniel W. Lipinski
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Dina Titus
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Yvette D. Clarke
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Filemon Vela
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Scott H. Peters
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Mary Gay Scanlon
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Jackie Speier
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Elissa Slotkin
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Jerrold Nadler
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Derek Kilmer
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Karen Bass
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Jimmy Panetta
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Mikie Sherrill
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Hakeem Jeffries
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José E. Serrano
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A. Donald McEachin
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Greg Stanton
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Daniel T. Kildee
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Mark DeSaulnier
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Antonio Delgado
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Diana DeGette
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Katie Porter
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Albio Sires
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

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Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

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Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress

/s/
Tom O'Halleran
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/s/
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

/s/
Jason Crow
Member of Congress

/s/
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress