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
/s/
Susan Wild
Member of Congress

/s/
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/
Ed Case
Member of Congress

/s/
Mike Levin
Member of Congress

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

/s/
Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

/s/
John Garamendi
Member of Congress

/s/
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/
Grace Meng
Member of Congress

/s/
James Langevin
Member of Congress

/s/
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

/s/
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

/s/
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/
Katherine Clark
Member of Congress

/s/
Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

/s/
Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress

/s/
Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/
Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

/s/
Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/
Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

/s/
Lori Trahan
Member of Congress

/s/
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress
Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko
Member of Congress

Harley Rouda
Member of Congress

Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress