

July 15, 2019

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Immigration and Citizenship
U.S. House Committee on Judiciary
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Buck
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Immigration and Citizenship
U.S. House Committee on Judiciary
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lofgren and Ranking Member Buck,

On behalf of the American Council on Education (ACE) and the undersigned associations, I write in advance of the July 16th U.S. House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship hearing on “Policy Changes and Processing Delays at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.” The purpose of the hearing will examine the depth and breadth of the USCIS processing delays and the role of USCIS policies in these delays. Thank you for holding this important hearing.

As you are aware, U.S. colleges and universities are part of a worldwide network of learning, research, and education. Our institutions enroll over a million students from all over the world in undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs. Many of these students and scholars have gone on to invent groundbreaking technology, start thriving businesses, and create jobs. The over one million international students that currently attend U.S. colleges and universities add to the United States’ intellectual and cultural vibrancy, while also yielding an estimated economic impact of \$39 billion and support for 455,000 U.S. jobs.

In the last two years, there has been a historic drop in new and continuing enrollments for international students at U.S. institutions of higher education. We believe a core problem is the lack of predictability that surrounds the visa process for prospective and current international students and employers. Students need assurance that the rules will not suddenly change so they can make plans. Employers also need certainty so they can engage in appropriate workforce planning. The current lack of clarity makes it more challenging for schools to globally compete for international students and advise them about training and employment opportunities.

We believe there are sensible steps the administration can take to communicate predictability and ensure that our nation can continue to compete successfully for top international talent. We have asked that the Administration commit to improving visa-processing times for students. We have heard extensive anecdotal evidence from colleges, universities, and students that visa-processing times have slowed, which has caused frustration among international students and scholars, discouraging them from studying or engaging in scholarship and research in the United States¹. We do not seek

¹ May 2, 2019 letter from Leaders of New Jersey Colleges and Universities to New Jersey Congressional delegation, <https://president.princeton.edu/blogs/letter-president-eisgruber-and-other-leaders-new-jersey-colleges-and-universities-new-jersey>, and June 24, 2019 letter from the Michigan Association of State Universities and the Michigan Independent Colleges and Universities to the Michigan Congressional

to undermine a full vetting of a prospective student to protect legitimate U.S. security interests. Rather we ask only that the administration commit to doing this more expeditiously.

It would be especially helpful if the Administration would publicly commit to maintain premium processing without the service interruptions that have characterized this essential option in the past. This option is especially important in connection with I-539 Applications to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status applications and I-129 Petitions for Nonimmigrant Worker for H-1Bs.

In addition, we have recommended that the administration reconvene public meetings of the Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council (HSAAC), which brings together higher education leadership, as well as representatives from DHS and the State Department, and provide seats on the Council to our associations.

We are encouraged that Congress is looking closely at issues with the visa processing delays, and we look forward to working with you and the administration to continue to address these issues and ensure that the U.S. remains a welcoming country for international students and scholars.

Respectfully,



Ted Mitchell
President

Cc: Members of U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship

On behalf of:

American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

delegation,

<https://www.masu.org/Portals/0/docs/MI%20Higher%20Ed%20Immigration%20Letter%206-24-2019.pdf>