



July 9th, 2020

U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Border Security and Immigration

Subcommittee Chair
Senator John Cornyn

Ranking Member
Senator Richard Durbin

U.S. House Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship

Subcommittee Chair
Representative Zoe Lofgren

Ranking Member
Representative Ken Buck

Today, we are writing to you as student leaders of the fourteen Big Ten institutions who collectively represent over 45,000 international students and scholars. We are appalled by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency's decision to put international students at risk of deportation if their institution operates online during the upcoming academic year. We firmly stand with our international peers as students and scholars who are essential to our campus communities. This policy is unfair and cruel to the thousands of international students who have chosen to study at our respective institutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on our international student community, and this decision only exacerbates the stress and confusion among international undergraduate and graduate students. ICE's new policy places thousands of students at a higher risk of contracting and further transmitting COVID-19. Furthermore, the policy will disrupt international students' academic endeavors, presenting them with additional financial barriers, while also causing significant harm to the economies of our states and the country. Moreover, the policy threatens the diverse social and academically-enriching environments of our institutions. Our institutions would not recover from such damaging effects. Our international students should never be subjected to such unfair stressors, especially during difficult times.

During uncertain times with ever-changing academic instruction plans, flexibility is imperative for student success, and our federal government must recognize this. The decision to transition to online instruction is one of administrators and is beyond international students' control. The ICE policy presents greater limitations and hinders our institutions from focusing on creating safe and healthy campuses for faculty, staff, and all students, and significantly disrupts the academic endeavors and overall well-being of international students and scholars.

Therefore, we ask that Congress intervene and take action to protect international students during times of extreme vulnerability. The decision ICE has made will only dissuade the brightest minds from attending our universities. In the Big Ten, we welcome, encourage, and support all students from around the world in their learning and research environments. We demand that our government share that sentiment. As a nation, we must stand boldly in the belief that all international students are welcome to learn, research, and thrive at our universities.

Sincerely,

Aidan Sova, Executive Director of the Association of Big Ten Students
Assata Gilmore, Student Body President of Purdue University - West Lafayette

Amy Ma, Student Body President of the University of Minnesota
Abii-Tah Chungong Bih, Student Body President of Michigan State University
Connor Wooff, Student Body President of the University of Iowa
Roni Miller, Student Body President of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Zachary McKay, Student Body President of Penn State University — University Park
Rachel Aranyi, Student Body President of Indiana University — Bloomington
Nicholas F. LaBelle, Student Body President of Rutgers University - New Brunswick
Amanda Kaplan, Student Body President of the University of Michigan -- Ann Arbor
Dan Alpert, Student Body President of the University of Maryland — College Park
Laura Downer, Student Body President of the University of Wisconsin
Roaya Higazi, Student Body President at the Ohio State University
Alexis Perezchica, Student Body President at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign
Juan Zuniga, Student Body Vice President of Northwestern University