

January 22, 2015

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senate
104 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Marco Rubio
United States Senate
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons
United States Senate
127A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Flake
United States Senate
368 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Hatch, Klobuchar, Rubio, Coons, Flake, and Blumenthal,

As associations representing thousands of public and private nonprofit institutions of higher education in the United States, we write in strong support of the Immigration Innovation Act of 2015 (“I-Squared bill”). We thank you for your leadership in addressing an issue so critical to our nation’s economy and global competitiveness.

The legislation would take steps to end the unfortunate flaw in our current immigration system in which we train the world’s most talented international students at our colleges and universities only to see many of them forced to return home upon completion of their studies for no reason other than lack of available visas. The incredible talent of so many of these students is visible on our campuses every day. If provided the opportunity to remain here, they would undoubtedly make powerful contributions to our communities and our nation as a whole.

In addition to the missed opportunity, it is clear that our economy needs these graduates. According to projections, the United States will face a shortfall of more than 200,000 advanced-degree STEM workers by 2018. In many STEM areas, foreign students are a majority of the Ph.D. graduates from U.S. universities. Yet despite the obvious need for the skills offered by these graduates, our outdated immigration system forces many of them to leave, sacrificing the innovation and economic growth they would create here.

We are pleased that the bill eliminates the H-1B cap for advanced-degree graduates. We also strongly support the exemption of advanced-degree STEM graduates from

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employment-based green card limits. Importantly, the legislation defines STEM through the Department of Homeland Security's STEM list, which we strongly support. The DHS list includes vital fields that sometimes have been excluded in other bills, such as agricultural and natural resource sciences.

We also support the creation of a visa fee to fund STEM education programs. However, we hope to work with you as the legislation advances to find ways to limit the application of the fee on nonprofit colleges and universities in a manner similar to the higher education exemption from the H-1B Education and Training fee. In short, the proposed STEM visa fee takes from STEM education with one hand while giving it back with another, in effect undermining the purpose of the fee.

Thank you again for your work on the I-Squared bill. We look forward to working with you to help advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Michael V. Reilly
Executive Director
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

Walter R. Bumphus
President and CEO
American Association of Community Colleges

Muriel A. Howard
President
American Association of State Colleges and Universities

Molly Corbett Broad
President
American Council on Education

Hunter R. Rawlings III
President
Association of American Universities

Rev. Michael J. Sheeran, SJ
President
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

Peter McPherson
President
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

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President and CEO
College and University Professional Association for Human Resources

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Kevin Kruger
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NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education