

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chair, Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

I am writing on behalf of the Graduate Student Assembly of Carnegie Mellon University representing over 7,000 students, more than half of whom are international students, to highlight the critical connection between immigration and America's post-secondary education, research, and economic growth. We are grateful for your leadership on this important topic and hope that the Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship works on bipartisan legislation to attract and retain scientific talent from around the world.

Our country's global leadership in education and research allows us to attract some of the world's best and brightest to our colleges and universities,¹ and this leadership comes with a large number of economic and national security boons.² The ability to maintain our nation's global education and research leadership, as well as the economic and security perks this status provides, is intimately tied into our nation's immigration system. Nearly 40% of all STEM PhDs, and 60% of Computer Science PhDs in the U.S. are awarded to international students, many of whom do not have a realistic path to settle in the U.S. post graduation, causing them to take their talents elsewhere.³ This means that the current system of immigration that restricts the inflow and retention of global talent threatens our advantage, and by extension our economy and national security.⁴

¹ <https://www.publicsource.org/pittsburgh-international-student-first-person-carnegie-mellon-trump-biden/>

² I'm the President of M.I.T. America Needs Foreign Students. L. Rafael Reif. 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/14/opinion/coronavirus-trump-immigration-students.html>; The Can-Do Power: America's Advantage and Biden's Chance. Samantha Power. 2021. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-11-20/samantha-power-can-do-power>

³ Foreign-born Students And Workers In The U.S. Science And Engineering Enterprise. National Science Board. 2020. <https://www.nsf.gov/nsb/sei/one-pagers/Foreign-Born.pdf>; Shulamit Kahn & Megan MacGarvie, The Impact of Permanent Residency Delays for STEM PhDs: Who Leaves and Why, Research Policy (Nov. 2020), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0048733319301982>

⁴ Canada's Immigration System Increasingly Draws Talent from the United States. Zachary Arnold. 2020. <https://cset.georgetown.edu/research/canadas-immigration-system-increasingly-draws-talent-from-the-united-states/>; The Global Competition for Scientific Minds is Heating Up. Caleb Watney. 2020. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/02/us-immigration-policy-global-competition-for-scientific-minds-heating-up/>; Keeping Top AI Talent in the United States. Remco Zwetsloot. 2019. <https://cset.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Keeping-Top-AI-Talent-in-the-United-States.pdf>; The Contest for Innovation: Strengthening America's National Security Innovation Base in an Era of Strategic Competition. Task Force on 21st-Century National Security Technology and Workforce. 2019. https://www.reaganfoundation.org/media/356469/task-force-report_011121.pdf; Taking the Helm: A National Technology Strategy to Meet the China Challenge. Martijn Rasser and Megan Lamberth. 2021. <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/taking-the-helm-a-national-technology-strategy-to-meet-the-china-challenge>; The Egghead Gap—If America Wants to Keep China from Setting The Global Course of Science, We Need a Crash Program to Recruit International Talent. Caleb Watney. 2021. <https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/the-egghead-gap>

As the name of this hearing implies, many other nations are also competing in the global talent market and adopting immigration policies that are beginning to provide them with a competitive advantage. For example, within the last year the U.K. established a Global Talent Visa that provides fast track, cap-exempt Visa for talented applicants,⁵ and even earlier than that Canada began to increase its number of student Visas and postgraduate work and residency opportunities.⁶ The U.S. needs programs such as these if it wishes to remain globally competitive. I commend the efforts of President Biden, Senator Menendez, Congresswoman Sanchez, and the other original cosponsors of the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 for introducing legislation that, among many things, would exempt STEM PhD students at U.S. universities from green card caps.

In its report to Congress, the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence said, “Congress should amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to grant lawful permanent residence to any vetted (not posing a national security risk) foreign national who graduates from an accredited United States institution of higher education with a doctoral degree in a field related to science, technology, engineering, or mathematics in a residential or mixed residential and distance program; and has a job offer in a field related to science, technology, engineering, or mathematics. They should not be counted towards permanent residency caps.”⁷ Solutions like these are required to update the immigration system and preserve our nation’s global talent lead. Updating the U.S. immigration system is not only necessary, it is also popular and has consistent bipartisan support,⁸ with 77% of Americans believing that immigration benefits the country.⁹

As a representative of Carnegie Mellon University’s Graduate Student Assembly, I look forward to working with you to maintain our nation’s global lead in higher education and research. If you have any questions, or if I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at gsa-vpea@andrew.cmu.edu.

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⁵ Boost for UK science with unlimited visa offer to world's brightest and best. 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/boost-for-uk-science-with-unlimited-visa-offer-to-worlds-brightest-and-best>

⁶ International Students Pour Into Canada While The U.S. and Others Lag Behind. 2013.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/andyjsemotiuk/2018/11/16/international-students-pour-into-canada-ahead-of-projections/?sh=ea8f09053ecf>

⁷ Final Report. National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence. 2021.

<https://www.nscai.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Full-Report-Digital-1.pdf>

⁸ Poll: Support for immigration reform. Seung Min Kim. 2013.

<https://www.politico.com/story/2013/11/immigration-reform-support-poll-099532>

⁹ Americans Want More, Not Less, Immigration for First Time. Mohamed Younis. 2020.

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/313106/americans-not-less-immigration-first-time.aspx>

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