

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

July 14, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane SW  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

We write to express serious concern about U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)'s announcement on July 6 related to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program's requirements for nonimmigrant students.

This new guidance implements a deeply inappropriate and harmful policy in the midst of the current global COVID-19 pandemic. It prevents international students from entering or remaining in the United States if they are taking a full online course load during the fall semester. This restriction applies even in situations where colleges are forced to cancel previously planned in-person classes as a result of a local COVID-19 outbreak. This policy does not provide any flexibility for students who are unable to return to their home countries as a result of international travel restrictions or other local circumstances resulting from the pandemic.

Colleges and universities must be able to respond to this unprecedented and continually evolving crisis based on the latest public health guidance and the immediate needs of their communities. They need to be able to make difficult decisions about how best to provide high-quality education while protecting the health of students, faculty and staff. They need regulatory flexibility to respond to emergency situations and other contingencies as they arise.

The United States is a world leader in education. The best and brightest students from around the world attend our schools. International students enhance our colleges and universities and benefit our local communities. In our state of New Hampshire, we have more than 4,300 international students who contribute more than \$140 million to our local economies and support more than 1,700 local jobs. The public health and economic impacts of this new ICE policy will be disastrous.

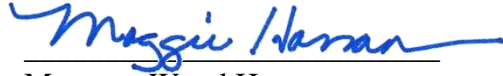
For courses during the spring and summer of 2020, ICE issued a temporary exemption to regulatory requirements on international students' usage of online courses, in recognition of the unique challenges and dangers the COVID-19 pandemic has posed for higher education. There is no public health justification for the decision to end this policy; this exemption must be continued into fall 2020 in order to keep campuses safe.

We urge you to reverse this ill-conceived decision and to instead extend the temporary exemptions for international students taking online classes due to the pandemic.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress

CC: Matthew Albence, Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement