

PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE | ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION

July 12, 2019

Steering Committee

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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
290 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-221, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
331 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Graham, and Ranking Member Feinstein:

As the Steering Committee for the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration (Presidents' Alliance), we write to express our qualified support of the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act of 2019 (S.386 in the Senate and H.R.1044 in the House). This legislation would lift the employment per-country caps and raise the family per-country caps to 15 percent. We are heartened to see that this bipartisan legislation represents a good-faith effort to address the inherent inequities in our immigration system that lead to immigrants from certain countries waiting decades before a visa becomes available.¹ Importantly, we view this bill as a starting point for larger, greatly needed reforms to our immigration system, including other reforms to promote our nation's competitiveness in regards to international students and scholars and to establish a roadmap to citizenship for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, Dreamer students and others.

The non-partisan Presidents' Alliance is comprised of over 430 college and university presidents and chancellors of public and private institutions. Together, our members' institutions enroll over four million students across 41 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico. The Presidents' Alliance is deeply concerned about how changes in our nation's immigration policies and practices impact our students and campuses and the states and localities we serve, including attracting international students. We are committed to

¹ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, Visa Bulletin for July 2019 (Number 31, Volume X, July 2019), https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Bulletins/visabulletin_july2019.pdf

welcoming and supporting undocumented, other immigrant, and international students on our campuses.²

Current immigration law limits the number of immigrants from a single country who can obtain an employment or family-based visa to seven percent for each category. This restriction, coupled with an inadequate number of employment and family visas, means that immigrants from certain countries, including India, Mexico, and the Philippines, must wait decades to obtain lawful permanent residence or come to our country lawfully, even if they are eligible and approved for a visa. The country caps also undermine the principle of family reunification, the bedrock principle of our immigration system, keeping families apart for longer than necessary.

These wait times can be particularly detrimental for foreign student alumni of U.S. institutions who are on short-term work visas and who are *already* residing in the country waiting to adjust status. Concurrently, as a result of the backlog, the children of H-1B visa holders (the children who hold H4 visas) often age out of status, losing their visa at the age of 21 while waiting for their parents to receive a green card.

The consequences of these delays impact the United States' economic competitiveness, including the ability for U.S.-based institutions to attract international students and talent. Already, prospective international students from India, seeing the tremendous backlogs that await them after graduating from a U.S.-based university and obtaining an H-1B visa, may simply choose to attend school in other countries with more welcoming policies.

While we believe that a preferable approach would be to increase the overall cap on applications to deal with the current inequities, we appreciate the intent behind this legislation. The bill's goal to establish parity and equity in our immigration system and to eventually clear out the backlogs in our system is compelling.³

For these reasons, we at the Presidents' Alliance support the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act of 2019, applaud the House's passage of H.R. 1044, and now urge the Senate to pass this legislation swiftly and without delay. If you have any questions, please contact Jose Magaña-Salgado at (202) 777-8998 or jose@presidentsimmigrationalliance.org.

Sincerely,

² For more information about the Presidents' Alliance, visit <https://www.presidentsimmigrationalliance.org>.

³ Stuart Anderson, *Bill Aims To End Decades-Long Waits For High-Skilled Immigrants*, Forbes, Feb. 15, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2019/02/15/bill-aims-to-end-decades-long-waits-for-high-skilled-immigrants/#375ee8127b85>.



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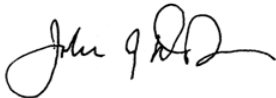
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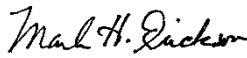
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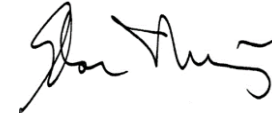
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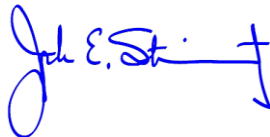
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Cc:
Senator Mike Lee
Senator Kamala Harris