



July 10, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Matthew T. Albence
Deputy Director and Senior Official Performing the
Duties of the Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Washington D.C. 20536

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Deputy Director Albence:

As higher education leaders in Massachusetts, we were stunned by the recent July 6, 2020 guidance by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) regarding nonimmigrant F-1 and M-1 students. This rule change is cruel, irresponsible, and delivers more anxiety and confusion for international students in Massachusetts.

In March, due to the unexpected, unprecedented, and sudden transition to remote and online learning, many federal and state agencies provided regulatory and administrative flexibility to students and postsecondary institutions. In fact, SEVP rightfully provided an exemption for international students so they could continue learning and remain safe amidst a global pandemic – a crisis that is far from over.

We deeply value our international students, who are incredibly important to the cultural fabric of our institutions and the Commonwealth. The students also serve as major economic drivers in Massachusetts. During the previous 2018-2019 academic year, international students contributed \$3.2 billion and supported more than 38,000 jobs in the Commonwealth's economy ([NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#)). In Massachusetts, it's clear that the thousands of international students are critical to the success of the higher education sector.

The decision by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to modify these exemptions threatens the futures of many international students amidst quite grim public health prospects over the next several months. We denounce these changes and urge the SEVP and ICE to reinstate the previous exemption for our students.

Sincerely,

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Laura L. Douglas, President
Bristol Community College

Pam Eddinger, President
Bunker Hill Community College

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C: Members of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation
Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges (MACC)
Massachusetts State Universities Council of Presidents
University of Massachusetts President's Office
Massachusetts Department of Higher Education