

May 20, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. President,

More than ever before, the country is relying on the scientific enterprise to help guide our path to recovery. Scientific progress and U.S. economic development are vastly accelerated by bringing the best and brightest minds together. Therefore, **we urge you to prioritize the immigration of science and technology talent that will spur the scientific breakthroughs and economic growth of the United States that is needed for rapid recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The American research and development (R&D) ecosystem is already under immense pressure with most research projects on hold or appropriately redirected to help with the pandemic. Further strain on America's scientific enterprise will hinder our efforts to respond to SARS-CoV-2, threaten our position as a global leader in science and technology, and slow economic growth. Our nation's knowledge- and technology-intensive industries¹ account for 17% of Gross Domestic Product and generate \$2.7 trillion in output, outpacing any other sector.²

A world-leading research enterprise – and its associated economic benefits – is due, in large part, to America's ability to attract researchers and students from around the world. The enterprise is largely fueled by the work of extraordinary and dedicated students conducting thousands of experiments around the clock. In many science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields, international students comprise over 50% of PhD recipients.³ U.S. government actions could affect the number of international graduate student applications and enrollments at U.S. institutions, impeding scientific progress at this critical time. A recent survey⁴ by the American Physical Society showed that physics graduate students in particular perceived that other nations are more welcoming to international students. The current immigration restrictions, along with indications of broader feelings of antipathy, dull the advantage that the U.S. relies on to remain the premier destination for the world's best and brightest minds.

Our safety and return to daily activities following the COVID-19 outbreak will largely be delivered by America's STEM enterprise. This enterprise will also play a vital role in U.S. economic recovery. Limiting immigration to the United States reduces our ability to attract the best available minds to this endeavor. We stand ready to work with you to formulate policies that accelerate this scientific and technological progress while invigorating our nation's economy.

¹ National Science Board, "[Production and Trade of Knowledge and Technology Intensive Industries](#)," Science and Engineering Indicators 2020. Knowledge and technology intensive industries include aircraft, computer, electronic and optical products, pharmaceuticals, scientific R&D services, software publishing, chemicals, electrical equipment, information technology services, machinery and equipment, medical and dental instruments, motor vehicles, railroad and other transportation and weapons.

² Mark Muro, Jonathan Rothwell, Scott Andes, Kenan Fikri, and Siddharth Kulkarni, "[America's Advanced Industries: What They Are, Where They Are, and Why They Matter](#)," (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2015)

³ National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics. 2019. *Doctorate Recipients from U.S. Universities: 2018*. Special Report NSF 20-301. Alexandria, VA. Available at <https://ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf20301/>.

⁴ American Physical Society, "[Attracting the Best Students in the World to U.S. Universities: Challenges and Opportunities](#)," (Washington, D.C.: October, 2019)

Sincerely,

Academy for Radiology & Biomedical Imaging Research
American Anthropological Association
American Association for Dental Research
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Physicists in Medicine
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Astronomical Society
American Chemical Society
American Educational Research Association
American Geophysical Union
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Institute of Physics
American Mathematical Society
American Physical Society
American Physiological Society
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Cell Biology
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics
American Society of Plant Biologists
AVS: Science and Technology of Materials, Interfaces, and Processing
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences
Biophysical Society
Coalition for the Life Sciences
Council of Scientific Society Presidents
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Geological Society of America
Mathematical Association of America (MAA)
OSA-The Optical Society
Society for Freshwater Science
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics
Society for Research in Child Development
Society of Vacuum Coaters (SVC)
SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics

cc:

The Honorable Kelvin Droegemeier, Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, United States Senate

The Honorable Lindsey Graham, Chair, Senate Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Roger Wicker, Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler, Chair, House Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Mary Gay Scanlon, Vice-Chair, House Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Jim Jordan, Ranking Member, House Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chair, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

The Honorable Frank Lucas, Ranking Member, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations