

U.S. Reps. Pocan, Dingell: Lead opposition to new student visa policy that puts America's international students at risk

Posted on Thursday, Jul 9, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Representatives Debbie Dingell (D-MI) and Mark Pocan (D-WI) led more than 100 of their colleagues in opposing the Trump Administration's changes to [the Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\)](#) that would mean students taking a full online course load cannot remain in the United States, putting international students at risk. The lawmakers urged the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to rescind the policy and provide certainty for international students and the higher education community.

The change in policy comes just weeks before fall classes are set to begin and as many colleges and universities are considering transitioning to online learning for fall 2020 as a result of COVID-19.

“Given that many universities are planning on temporarily transitioning to online-only learning for the fall 2020 semester, this new policy puts many of these students at risk of deportation if they attempt to continue their education in the United States this fall. This disruption will threaten university communities and have a chilling effect on international students' willingness to study in the United States moving forward,” the lawmakers wrote.

According to State Department data, there are nearly 400,000 holders of F visas

and nearly 10,000 holders of M visas in the United States as of last year. International students play a key role in academic life in universities across the country by supporting cutting-edge research, enriching campus life, and helping the United States maintain its leadership role in higher education. Their presence is not only fundamental to academic life, but also supports hundreds of thousands of jobs across the country each year.

The lawmakers concluded, **“International students both enrich the higher education experience for all students and are a key part of the higher education ecosystem. The modifications to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program are needlessly punitive and fundamentally threaten a cornerstone of our nation’s higher education system. With this mind, we urge you to rescind these changes to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program.”**

Led by Dingell and Pocan, the letter was also signed by Representatives Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Vicente Gonzalez (D-TX), Adam Smith (D-WA), Adriano Espaillat (D-NY), Barbara Lee (D-CA), André Carson (D-IN), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Stephine Murphy (D-FL), Gil Cisneros (D-CA), Donald Payne, Jr. (D-NJ), John Garamendi (D-CA), Ron Kind (D-WI), Tony Cárdenas (D-CA), Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ), David Trone (D-MD), Jahana Hayes (D-CT), Joe Morelle (D-NY), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Joe Neguse (D-CO), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Mike Doyle (D-PA), Debbie Murcarsel-Powell (D-FL), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), Elliot Engel (D-NY), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Gwen Moore (D-WI), Lauren Underwood (D-IL), Hank Johnson (D-GA), Lori Trahan (D-MA), Steve Cohen (D-TN), Jose Serrano (D-NY), Nydia Velázquez (D-NY), Jim Cooper (D-TN), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Brian Higgins (D-NY), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), David Price (D-NC), Albio Sires (D-NJ), Rick Larsen (D-WA), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Ed Case (D-HI), Sanford Bishop (D-GA), Madeleine Dean (D-PA), Alcee Hastings (D-FL), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Dan Kildee (D-MI), Mark Takano (D-CA), Julia Brownley (D-CA), Paul Tonko (D-NY), Donald Norcross (D-CA), Yvette Clarke (D-NY), Seth Moulton (D-MA), GK Butterfield (D-NC), Doris Matsui (D-CA), Tim Ryan (D-OH), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), Scott Peters (D-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Anne McLane Kuster (D-NH), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Mike Thompson (D-CA), Grace F. Napolitano (D-CA), Darren Soto

(D-FL), Kathleen M. Rice (D-NY), Stephen F. Lynch (D-MA), Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ), Donna E. Shalala (D-FL), Conor Lamb (D-PA), Judy Chu (D-CA), Jared Huffman (D-CA), Gregory W. Meeks (D-NY), Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ), Peter Welch (D-VT), Betty McCollum (D-MN), David N. Cicilline (D-RI), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), Anthony G. Brown (D-MD), Ted Deutch (D-FL), Dave Loebsack (D-IA), Andy Kim (D-NJ), Norma J. Torres (D-CA), Deb Haaland (D-NM), Bill Foster (D-IL), Danny K. Davis (D-IL), T.J. Cox (D-CA), Grace Meng (D-NY), Ted W. Lieu (D-CA), William R. Keating (D-MA), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), John Yarmuth (D-KY), John P. Sarbanes (D-MD), Abby Finkenauer (D-IA), Susan Wild (D-PA), Anna G. Eshoo (D-CA), Filemon Vela (D-TX), and Colin Allred (D-TX).

A copy of the letter is [available here](#) and below:

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

We are writing to express our concern regarding the recent modifications to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program that will end temporary exemptions for nonimmigrant students on F-1 and M-1 visas taking classes online for the fall 2020 semester. With many universities transitioning to online learning, this policy will potentially require many international students to leave the country during the COVID-19 pandemic rather than continue their studies this fall. This will pose a threat to our nation's leadership in higher education and will have significant human costs if not promptly rescinded.

According to State Department data, there are nearly 400,000 holders of F visas and nearly 10,000 holders of M visas in the United States as of last year. These students play a key role in academic life in universities across the country by supporting cutting-edge research, enriching campus life, and helping the United States maintain its leadership role in higher education. Their presence is not only fundamental to academic life, but also support hundreds of thousands of jobs across the country each academic year.

Given that many universities are planning on temporarily transitioning to online-only learning for the fall 2020 semester, this new policy puts many of these students at risk of deportation if they attempt to continue their education in the

United States this fall. This disruption will threaten university communities and have a chilling effect on international students' willingness to study in the United States moving forward.

International students both enrich the higher education experience for all students and are a key part of the higher education ecosystem. The modifications to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program are needlessly punitive and fundamentally threaten a cornerstone of our nation's higher education system. With this mind, we urge you to rescind these changes to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your prompt response.