

# United States Senate

July 10, 2020

Mr. Matthew T. Albence  
Acting Director  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
500 12<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Acting Director Albence,

We write to urge U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to modify the July 6, 2020, Student and Visitor Exchange Program (SEVP) guidance and provide maximum flexibility to institutions of higher education and international students. As written, the July 6 guidance will negatively impact institutions of higher education and their international students, curtail their research capabilities and competitiveness, and have a lingering adverse impact on local economies.

Like many state and local entities, institutions of higher education have had to confront COVID-19 while continuing to educate their students and remain a safe and healthy space for their communities. To that end, ICE issued guidance on March 13, 2020 allowing international students at institutions offering their curriculum online to remain in legal immigration status due to the “extraordinary nature of the COVID-19 emergency.”

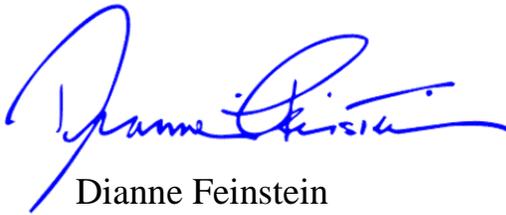
As they navigate COVID-19 and the new SEVP guidance, colleges and universities should be able to make decisions about re-opening based on public health guidance or local orders issued by the Governor or county officials, not the risk that their students will be deported. Reopening campuses safely requires maximum flexibility to follow public health guidance, implement safety measures, allow for social distancing, and abide by the additional administrative burdens of this new guidance. We therefore urge ICE to return to the March guidance and to consult further with all relevant stakeholders before making additional changes.

The best and the brightest from around the world come to the United States to study, teach, and research. Approximately 162,000 international students chose California’s thriving institutions of higher education to further their education. International students are a vital part of their communities and institutions and should

be welcomed and encouraged to remain in the United States and complete their studies, not threatened with deportation during a public health crisis.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator