



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

July 10, 2020

Senator Ron Johnson
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Tammy Baldwin
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Congressman Mark Pocan
1421 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Bryan Steil
1408 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner
2449 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Glenn Grothman
1427 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Ron Kind
1502 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Congresswoman Gwen Moore
2252 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Mike Gallagher
1230 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Honorable Members of the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation:

We recently became aware of new guidelines from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SVEP) for international students using F-1 and M-1 visas. Under the new guidelines, if a campus shifts to online instruction only, even due to a COVID-19 outbreak, students would be required to either leave the country or transfer to a campus offering in-person courses. We are writing to express our serious concerns with this new policy and to urge you to do everything within your power to ensure this rule is stayed or revised.

Every year, thousands of international students choose to live, study, and work in Wisconsin, forming an integral part of campus life, local communities, and our state's economy and culture. These students are in a difficult position already, weathering a global pandemic far from home and managing multiple challenges with travel restrictions, closures, quarantines, and more. For these students, leaving may mean abandoning their studies, as there is no guarantee that they are returning to a stable learning environment or that they have reliable means with which to connect to online courses from afar. Transferring from one campus to another also presents significant risks and challenges, as it would mean disrupting their lives, studies, and employment, requiring them to navigate the costs and logistics of moving, and potentially risking their health in the process.

As Chancellor Rebecca Blank of UW-Madison stated in a release, this new rule "creates confusion and uncertainty for international students... at a time when they need our support and encouragement" and "fails to provide flexibility that institutions and students may need to adapt to changing conditions." As institutions and local communities across the state prepare for the fall and endeavor to balance the public health and reopening, this rule muddies the already murky waters, increases barriers to learning, and will undoubtedly have a ripple effect felt throughout Wisconsin and beyond. We urge you to do everything within your power to support our international students by ensuring that this rule is revised or stayed.


Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your consideration of our request. Thank you for your leadership during these unprecedented and trying times.

Sincerely,

Katrina Shankland
State Representative
71st Assembly District

Jill Billings
State Representative
95th Assembly District


Dianne Hesselbein
State Representative
79th Assembly District



Jimmy Anderson
State Representative
47th Assembly District



Shelia Stubbs
State Representative
77th Assembly District



Jodi Emerson
State Representative
91st Assembly District