The MIT Graduate Student Council (GSC) represents the 6,900 graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). We firmly support policies that protect the rights of all students, regardless of race, color, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, religion, or immigration status. We firmly oppose any government actions that would result in the deportation of students enrolled at MIT, including undocumented students.

As such, we offer our strong support for Massachusetts Bill S.1305/H.3269, the Safe Communities Act.

We share the view of MIT Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart that “every MIT student deserves the same opportunities to study, to work, to travel—in short, to thrive here.” All MIT students, including those with undocumented status, are helping build our country through their scholarship, research, and service. Our country has invested in their future and education, and their deportation would represent both a moral and economic failure. The Safe Communities Act will help ensure their protection from actions based solely on their immigration status.

Currently, state, local, and campus police in Massachusetts may participate in enforcing immigration law, including identifying and detaining undocumented individuals. This creates a dangerous dynamic in which undocumented students might avoid interactions with our community police, thereby endangering themselves and the community as a whole. The Safe Communities Act would give these students confidence that they will not be punished for reporting public safety threats in their communities or coming forward as witnesses when needed.

The Safe Communities Act would further prevent state organizations from collecting data on ethnicity, national origin, or religion. Our student body represents a diverse range of backgrounds, which necessarily contributes to our community's character and perspective. We want to ensure that the origins and beliefs of MIT students and our neighbors around the Commonwealth will not be scrutinized and recorded in any potential future registry.

Although MIT has never described itself as a “sanctuary campus”, the Institute has adopted policies largely consistent with the intentions of the Safe Communities Act. Chancellor Barnhart explained in a March 2018 announcement that “MIT Police have a longstanding practice of not inquiring about individuals’ immigration status, and our officers are not responsible for enforcing federal immigration law. Additionally, the Institute does not voluntarily share information about individuals’ immigration status with federal or state agencies”. These policies have helped develop a positive relationship between the graduate student body and MIT Police, and we believe the closely related policies codified in the Safe Communities Act will make Massachusetts safer. We urge our representatives in the Statehouse to pass the Safe Communities Act.