Statement on COVID Relief Equity for International Students

The MIT Graduate Student Council (GSC) represents the 7,000 graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in all matters concerning their welfare, economic opportunities, and professional careers after graduation. Approximately 41% of graduate students (2,900) and 10% of undergraduate students (450) at MIT are international.

We strongly urge Congress to ensure equitable eligibility of international students for all higher education emergency relief funds and are heartened to see this included as Section 150110 of the HEROES Act. With this support, international students will be able to continue strengthening our nation’s research, education, and economic sectors, and remain important members of our campus community.

International students hold temporary, non-immigrant visas and face many unique struggles as they pursue their studies, including the mental, financial, and professional burden of having to leave their university and the country to renew visas with no certainty when they will return. These inequities have only been worsened by the closures, postponements, and forced move-outs that have accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic in universities, stranding international students in the country without the support of family that their domestic counterparts can rely on. Considering the immense value international students bring to our education system and economy, we should strive to reduce the inequities and not exacerbate them.

If you would like to know more about the importance of international students to universities and our nation, or would like to discuss additional methods of advancing graduate education and research, please reach out to us at gsc-eab-fed@mit.edu.

Prepared by the External Affairs Board on behalf of the MIT Graduate Student Council. May 2020.