



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

**Statement Endorsing the EAGLE Act**

We are writing on behalf of students and student governments at X universities representing over X students to highlight the crucial impact of immigrants on America's post-secondary education system and our nation's economic growth and research enterprise. Our leadership and advantage in the global education and research enterprise manifests in our continued ability to attract the best and the brightest from around the world to our colleges and universities. Unfortunately, the status quo risks eroding this advantage. We thank you both for your leadership in introducing the Equal Access to Green cards for Legal Employment Act of 2021 (H.R. 3648) to address these issues in the 117th Congress, and we urge Congress to swiftly pass this bill.

As you are aware, the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service projects that if current country-of-origin caps on immigration for skilled labor remain in place, by 2030, applicants in the EB-1 category—including STEM Ph.D. graduates from U.S. universities—from India and China would have to face visa backlogs of 18 and 15 years, respectively; while applicants in EB-2—including most graduates with a Master's degree—would face backlogs of 436 years and 51 years, respectively. The status quo would restrict the inflow of top-tier talent, damaging both our economy and our national security.

In its recent report to Congress, the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence said, "For the first time in our lifetime, the United States risks losing the competition for talent on the scientific frontiers. Cultivating more potential talent at home and recruiting and retaining more existing talent from foreign countries are the only two options to sustain the U.S. lead". Nearly 6 in 10 Mathematics and Computer Science Ph.D. degrees, and over 40% of all STEM Ph.D.s are awarded to international students. Many of these students do not have a realistic path to settle in the U.S. post graduation. **Unfortunately, international students in the United States are increasingly choosing to study in other countries or return home, and research has found that one of the biggest reasons is the growing backlog of green card petitions.** As Norm Augustine said in his recent testimony to Congress, "It is vitally important that more of America's youth be motivated and qualified to pursue careers in science and engineering; yet, without continuing to attract talent from around the world there is little chance that America can remain competitive."—it is clear the U.S. needs to reform its current immigration system for skilled labor if it wishes to remain competitive.

The EAGLE would phase out the arbitrary 7% country-of-origin cap in favor of a more equitable and ability-based first-come, first-serve system with uniform wait times regardless of an applicant's country of origin. This transition away from the 7% cap system—over a nine-year period—would ensure that current applicants, regardless of country of origin, will not experience an increase in their wait time. Without adding to the number of green cards or visas issued, the EAGLE would allow for a more streamlined immigration process for skilled workers, increasing the retention of talent. These policies are greatly needed, and we urge their swift passage.

The American people have consistently expressed bipartisan support for immigrants and immigration reform. In a recent poll, 77% of Americans believe that immigration is good for the country. Our nation's use of arbitrary immigration caps is outdated and has led to backlogs that threaten our retention of economically and strategically valuable international talent. Passage of the EAGLE Act would give this system a much needed overhaul.



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As student leaders of our nation's universities, we stand ready to work together with you on addressing these issues to ensure our global competitiveness in the global talent market. If you have any questions, or if there is anything we can assist you with, please reach out to Sven Burke at [gsa-vpea@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:gsa-vpea@andrew.cmu.edu) or Benjamin Lane at [bblane@mit.edu](mailto:bblane@mit.edu).

*Prepared by the External Affairs Board on behalf of the MIT Graduate Student Council. June 2021*