Student Immigration Reform to Recruit and Retain the Brightest Minds

The ability of the U.S. to attract the brightest minds of the world is continuously diminishing. The surge in highly-qualified students coming to the U.S. has waned. International student enrollment dropped by 6.6% in the 2017-2018 academic year [1,2]. These drops translate to a direct loss of income that international students provide to academic institutions and to several industries where the demand for highly-skilled workers continues to exceed supply from the U.S. workforce.

➢ International students supported 455K jobs and contributed $39B to the U.S. economy in 2018 [3]
➢ Immigrants founded 20% of Fortune 500 companies, including South-African born Elon Musk (Tesla, SpaceX), Russian-born Sergey Brin (Google) [4]

Retaining the World's Thinkers in the American Economy after Graduation

By impeding US-trained international talent from working for our companies we are losing from the next generation of innovators. The drop in international student applications originates from the perception of the growing difficulty to work in US companies after graduation.

➢ Increased delays in processing F1 student-visa OPT (Optional Practical Training) applications
➢ H1-B working visa denials reached 32% in 2019, a drastic increase from 6% in 2015 [5]
➢ The expanding use of “Request for Evidence” has delayed 60% of H1-B applications [6]

SAGE Recommends:

➢ Support S.2091 - Backlog Elimination, Legal Immigration, and Employment Visa Enhancement Act, to attract more high-skilled individuals and alleviate shortages
➢ Support S.1744 & H.R.4623 - Keep Stem Talent Act, to provide a path for U.S.-trained international students in STEM advanced degrees to stay and work in the U.S
➢ End H1-B and F1 OPT restrictive visa policies by better defining specialty occupations and H1-B qualifications beyond compensation

Equality of Opportunity in America: Allow Undocumented Students to Spur Our Economy

Higher education correlates with better wages and health, lower unemployment, and decreased likelihoods of needing disability payments [7]. Expanding access to state financial aid would facilitate undocumented student’s access to higher education and their ability to contribute to the US economy [8]. For example, Dreamers in Texas contribute more than 5x the amount in tuition than received in aid [9]

SAGE Recommends:

➢ Support H.R. 6, American Dream and Promise Act of 2019, to allow a pathway to citizenship for eligible undocumented immigrants
➢ Support H.R. 1298, Higher Education Dream Act of 2019, to support tuition equity for eligible immigrant youth Dreamers and to remove the barriers imposed by Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 in order to promote access to postsecondary education for students regardless of residency and immigration status