

DRAFT LETTER FOR MICHIGAN COMMENT FILERS

September 25, 2025

Submitted via www.regulations.gov

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Re: DHS Docket No. ICEB-2025-0001, Comments in Response to Establishing a Fixed Time Period of Admission and an Extension of Stay Procedure for Nonimmigrant Academic Students, Exchange Visitors, and Representatives of Foreign Information Media

To Whom It May Concern:

[DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION AND HOW YOU ENGAGE WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND/OR ARE IMPACTED BY THE ISSUES RELATED TO THE RULE. NOTE THAT INDIVIDUALS ALSO SHOULD BEGIN THEIR COMMENTS WITH THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND INTEREST IN THESE ISSUES.]

SAMPLE:

Global Detroit is a nonprofit economic development launched as a project of the Detroit Regional Chamber in 2010. Global Detroit's mission is to build a high-growth and vibrant regional economy by developing and implementing economic development strategies, policies, practices and programs leverage the contributions of immigrant talent, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Global Talent Retention Initiative (GTRI) launched as one of the nation's first international student retention programs outside of a university. The program was developed and launched in partnership with seven leading universities and several regional economic development organizations. Over the past 15 years, GTRI has received financial support from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (the state's economic development agency), the Michigan Legislature (via budget appropriations passed by Republican- and Democratic-controlled state legislatures), the U.S. Economic Development Administration (as part of the region's Global Epicenter of Mobility Build Back Better grant), corporate donors, and several local foundations.

Today GTRI works with approximately 30 Michigan colleges and universities and the nearly 25 local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, business and industry groups from across Michigan that comprise the Michigan Global Talent Coalition to help connect Michigan employers with graduating international student talents to help address unmet talent needs and to provide international students practical training. On an annual basis GTRI typically

serves between 1,000 to over 4,000 international students on an annual basis, while connecting with several hundred Michigan companies through job fairs, employer education seminars, soft skills development training, networking events, and a variety of additional activities.

I. The Proposed Rule Will Have Significant Economic Costs to the Michigan Economy and to Michigan's Economic Future.

[NOTE: We have removed all of the comments in the draft comments that discuss Global Detroit and the GTRI program, but it is highly recommended that you personalize the economic impacts to your organization, experience and knowledge as much as possible. You should feel free to copy and paste any of the analysis, economic research and survey data that appears below, in addition to personalizing your comments to yourself or your organization]

1. The proposed rule will decrease the number of international students choosing to study in the United States and, thus, Michigan.

It stands to reason that the rule as proposed will deter international students considering the U.S. as a destination to pursue their university and graduate studies. The proposed rule would require any student whose educational experience extends beyond a predetermined four-year cap to pursue an expensive and elaborate Extension of Stay (EOS) application. This application, which will require biometric data, possible in-person interviews and other information, in addition to out-of-pocket costs, adds significant delay and uncertainty. These new requirements will impact the majority of international students..

It is only logical that an international scholar thinking about where they may want to spend their tuition dollars and matriculate would need to think long and hard about attending a college or university in a country whose international student policies necessitate that the student will have to go through an uncertain EOS application process in order to complete their original educational program (including practical training) and/or plans. While the U.S. boasts a majority of the world's top universities, there are other options, and increasingly international students are selecting those other options.

Some examples of international students and exchange visitors who would exceed the four-year cap and who will be required to pursue EOS applications in order to complete their educational programs include:

- **Any and all bachelor's degree candidates who take the normal four years to obtain their degree and who wish to participate in the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program** will, by definition, require an EOS application.
- **Any and all users of the STEM OPT Extension opportunity** (unless the candidate has a one-year degree program) as the STEM OPT extension enables three years of practical training after one finishes their degree. STEM OPT users are those most valued by the private sector and the American economy and have served as a critical source of talent to help alleviate America's considerable STEM talent gap.
- **F-1 students pursuing bachelor's degrees who take longer than four years.** Nearly half of all international students would be required to pursue the EOS because, according to the National

Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the average time to complete a B.A. is 52 months (or 4.3 years).¹ NCES data shows that 44 percent of international students do not get their B.A. within four years, while 56 percent do complete the degree within four years. This sets up an unfair expectation given that international students are more likely to complete a bachelor's degree program within four years than domestic students (56 percent of international students complete in four years while only 44 percent of domestic students do). There are many good reasons for such delays, such as collegiate athletes who are "red-shirting" due to injury or for other reasons, as well as undergraduates who switch their majors, add an additional minor, or take courses outside of their major, all of which are important aspects that make a U.S. education attractive to international students.

- **The overwhelming majority of all doctorate candidates** would be required to seek an EOS. According to the aforementioned NCES data it takes an average of 5.7 years from the time one enters a PhD program to complete it, while those who complete the Master's/PhD sequence take an average of 7.5 years from entering graduate school to completion.
- The proposed rule would also have a disproportionately negative impact on **international students seeking medical training**, as well as foreign national physicians participating in U.S. medical residencies and fellowships as J-1 exchange visitors, whose programs can last from one to seven years depending on the medical specialty or subspecialty being pursued.
- The proposed rule causes an undue burden on **institutions that offer special programs, such as joint B.A. and Master's degree programs which can be accomplished in a five-year period**, saving the student time and money.

Recent survey evidence of over 1,000 current F-1 and J-1 visa holders, as well as over 600 prospective international students conducted by the Institute for Progress and NAFSA: Association of International Educators suggests that the proposed rule will indeed turn prospective international students off from considering pursuing their education in the U.S.² The surveys were distributed in anticipation of the Department's publication of the proposed rule. The survey results suggest that 49 percent of current student respondents said they would never have enrolled in the proposed rule had been in place. For prospective students, 16 percent said they were less likely to enroll. 48 percent of survey respondents who are current PhD students who also said they were planning to seek practical training employment experience in their field after completing their program reported they would not have initially come to the U.S. for their program if there was a fixed period of admission of up to four years with the ability to request an EOS.

It is clear that the adoption of the proposed rule will significantly deter international students and decrease international student enrollment in the U.S. and at Michigan colleges and universities.

2. The proposed rule will decrease the number of international students studying in Michigan, hurting Michigan's economy and Michigan's universities

¹ National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (2023) found at <https://nces.nsf.gov/surveys/earned-doctorates/2023#data>

² Survey results from IFP and NAFSA published September 15, 2025 found at <https://ifp.org/wp-content/uploads/2025-Surveys-on-International-Talent-Pipelines-1.pdf>

According to the IIE Open Doors report for the 2024-25 academic year, Michigan hosts 38,123 international students, the 8th largest population of international students of any state in the U.S.³ **These international students are estimated to spend \$1.46 billion every year in the Michigan economy** through tuition, rent, food, goods and services. To get a sense of the importance and size of these expenditures to Michigan's economy it can be helpful to compare them to hosting the NFL Draft in April 2024, one of the state's most successful economic development events in recent memory. The NFL Draft was hosted by the City of Detroit, the Detroit Lions, the Detroit Mayor, Michigan's Governor and the Detroit Visitor and Convention Bureau and shattered previous Draft attendance records, recording 775,000 attendees. The economic impact of this momentous event was heralded as an unmitigated success, as these attendees are estimated to have \$213 million into the local economy.

The annual impact from international student spending exceeds six NFL Drafts. Hosting international students is a major economic development activity for Michigan. In fact, it's more valuable than hosting the NFL Draft every other month or six times a year, year-in and year-out.

The national numbers in this regard are equally impressive. International students in the U.S. spend \$43.8 billion annually in the U.S., making it the 7th largest service export product in the U.S. economy.⁴ Those expenditures impact tens of thousands of retail business, landlords, tourism, hospitality and other business sectors in the university towns and communities across the nation. In August 2025—prior to the publication of this proposed rule—NAFSA and JB International predicted a 15 percent decline in overall international student enrollment this fall and 30-40 percent decline in new international student enrollment.⁵ The loss of these students is projected to cost the U.S. economy \$7 billion. **Extrapolating for Michigan, a 15 percent enrollment decline would result in a \$218 million economic loss—a loss greater than hosting the NFL Draft.**

While the economic impacts will be felt by several sectors in the Michigan economy, they will most acutely impact Michigan's colleges and universities at a critical time. International students have played a critical role in filling declining high school graduation numbers in Michigan because of declining birth rates. The number of high school diplomas awarded in Michigan has been in steady decline since 2008 and the number of high school graduates in 2023 was 14 percent below and nearly 15,000 diplomas less than that 2008 peak. In addition to a declining number of students, Michigan's 15 public colleges and universities are receiving less support from the State budget, having experienced a nearly \$370 million drop in funding from state government since 2011 adjusting for inflation according to the Michigan Association of State Universities.⁶

A significant decline in international student enrollment will either result in significant tuition increases to domestic students or the closure of academic programs and, possibly, even the closure of universities.

³ IIE Open Doors Michigan Fact Sheet (2024) found at https://opendoorsdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/OpenDoors_FactSheet_Michigan_2024.pdf

⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration found at <https://www.trade.gov/education-service-exports#:~:text=U.S.%20Education%20Service%20Exports,of%20Comme,rce%2C%20International%20Trade%20Administration.>

⁵ NAFSA (July 29, 2025) found at <https://www.nafsa.org/about/about-nafsa/us-economy-could-suffer-7-billion-loss-precipitous-drop-international-students>

⁶ Michigan Association of State Universities (2025) found at <https://www.masu.org/policy-reports/masu-legislative-priorities#:~:text=Michigan%20ranked%20last%20in%20the%20nation%20for,in%20the%20state's%20investment%20in%20student%20%E2%81nancial>

The closure of Marygrove College in 2019, Finlandia University in 2023 and the elimination of undergraduate programs at Concordia University are evidence that this threat is real. As noted, the proposed rule will make studying in the U.S. more costly and chaotic and is bound to serve as a disincentive for future international students to consider studying in the U.S. and, thus, in Michigan. Estimates suggest that international students comprise between 12 and 30 percent of all tuition dollars at America's public universities, a much-needed supply of revenue given declining public investment from state budgets and declining enrollment.

Losing universities, raising tuition rates, and eliminating academic programs have ripple effects on Michigan's innovation economy and supply of skilled talent so desperately needed by Michigan's automotive and manufacturing industries.

3. The proposed rule will devastate the supply of critical talent to the Michigan economy

According to the CompTIA Tech Jobs Report released in September 2025, there were over 450,000 unfilled technology jobs in the U.S., a number that has fluctuated between 400,000 and 600,000 over the last two years.⁷ The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that STEM jobs will grow approximately 10 percent between 2023 and 2033, a rate nearly three times faster than non-STEM jobs.⁸ Yet, as of 2019, the United States no longer awards the largest number of science and engineering (S&E) doctoral degrees of any country, as China surpassed the U.S. Michigan's economy and its economic success depend on the supply of critical talent.⁹

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer's top economic strategy, Sixty by 30, is designed to raise the skill levels of Michigan workers so that 60 percent of workers possess a post-secondary degree or credential by 2030. The Michigan Global Talent Coalition, a coalition of 25 local chambers, economic development organizations and statewide business and industry groups, was created to ensure that global talent can be utilized to help reach that goal. The state's economic development agency, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, has specifically identified electrical engineers and software developers as the most critical fields to Michigan's auto and mobility industry, arguably the backbone of the Michigan economy.

By depressing enrollment numbers from international students, the proposed rule will have devastating impacts to the national economy. According to an analysis of the proposed rule by economist Michael Clemens and Amy Nice and Jeremy Neufeld of the Institute for Progress **pegs the annual losses from the proposed rule at \$72-\$145 billion** by ten years into the future.¹⁰ The Clemens/Nice/Neufeld analysis accounts for the role of international students, scholars, and researchers play in the U.S. STEM workforce and the innovation that drives rising productivity in the U.S. economy. The analysis is premised on a very conservative projection of a 10 percent decline in F-1 student graduation numbers and resulting decline in international students who matriculate into the U.S. workforce. The trickle-down impacts are severe

⁷ CompTIA (September 2025) found at

https://lecbyo.files.cmp.optimizely.com/download/6b6fc8e4ff4a11efbebeaeb5c39a94d9?sfvrsn=725f3c8d_0

⁸ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (June 2025) found at

<https://www.bls.gov/opub/btn/volume-14/stem-alternate-definitions.htm#:~:text=According%20to%20data%20from%20the%20employment%20between%202023%20and%202033.>

⁹ National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (February 2022) found at

<https://nces.gov/pubs/nsb20223/executive-summary>

¹⁰ Institute for Progress (September 2025) found at

https://ifp.org/wp-content/uploads/Clemens-Neufeld-Nice_D.S.-Elimination.pdf

because, in large part, the loss of high-skilled foreign STEM workers matriculating from U.S. universities into the workforce

The economic losses will be immediate and deeply felt through the loss of students using the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program and the STEM OPT extension created under President George W. Bush in 2007. According to a May 2025 report from the Congressional Research Service there were over 418,000 nonimmigrants who were OPT authorized in 2024.¹¹

Michigan employers have been prime users of the OPT program and the state ranks 9th for the number of positions filled by F-1 students working on OPT between 2012-2022.¹² Over those 11 years, according to SEVIS data there were 117,373 jobs in Michigan filled by international students working on OPT over those 11 years, averaging more than 10,000 jobs per year. The vast majority of these jobs are STEM-related with large numbers of electrical engineers, software developers, mechanical engineers and other positions critical to Michigan's automotive industry.

Additionally, by reducing the F-1 "grace-period" from 60 days to 30 days some international students who otherwise might seek OPT employment will forego the opportunity and will not enter the U.S. workforce. Thirty days is a very limited period to complete one's lease, prepare to move and wrap up one's studies. Many international students are understandably focused on their academic requirements until the end of their final semester. The shorter grace period may result in some qualified international students who would otherwise investigate, consider and execute the OPT option available as part of their student visa. Thus, in addition to decreasing the number of international students, the proposed rule further cuts into the supply of international students willing to enter the U.S. workforce for practical training.

MEDC, the state's economic development organization, identified that the top positions that core employers in the automotive sector—the state's most significant industry—need support with recruiting include software developers and electrical engineers. The MEDC has stated that "the state's goal is to rapidly accelerate skilling in computer science, engineering and manufacturing to meet growing industry demand."¹³ According to research from the National Foundation for American Policy using National Science Foundation data, international students account for 74 percent of all the graduate students in America in electrical engineering and 72 percent of those in computer science.¹⁴ A decline in the number of international students in these fields will have massive impacts in Michigan's economic strategies and efforts to ensure that the state continues to be the global home for automotive design and manufacturing. In order for Michigan to continue its leadership it needs the talent in these critical fields to compete against Europe, Asia, Canada and other regions and nations.

The proposed rule not only will decrease enrollment by international students, but it will also directly impact private sector employers hiring F-1 students on OPT to fill critical talent shortages. Whereas Michigan employers could, prior to the rule, hire these students knowing that such workers could be employed without complicated visa applications, legal costs or filing fees, the proposed rule suggests

¹¹ Congressional Research Services (May 2025) found at <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12631>

¹² Analysis of SEVIS OPT data published by Department of Homeland Security in response to various FOIA requests

¹³ MEDC press release (March 2023) found at <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/press-releases/2023/03/talent-campaign-launch/>

¹⁴ National Foundation for American Policy (August 2021) found at <https://nfap.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/International-Students-in-Science-and-Engineering.NFAP-Policy-Brief.August-2021.pdf>

that virtually every international student bachelor's degree holder seeking to work on OPT will face a chaotic and uncertain EOS application that may delay start dates. Similarly, every OPT STEM worker will need to file an EOS application. Thus, employers will need to wait for uncertain start dates by these students and graduates seeking to work on OPT or will have to wonder whether an international STEM master's student can continue in their employment in the middle of their STEM OPT employment. We can expect private sector employers—who distaste red tape, uncertainty and chaotic processes—to decrease their use of this talent, only exacerbating the talent shortages already threatening Michigan's economic future.

4. The proposed rule threatens Michigan's innovation economy

International students have played a critical role in U.S. innovation. Over 50 percent of international students major in a STEM discipline, and international students comprise over 55 percent of all the graduate students in America in electrical engineering, computer science, industrial and manufacturing engineering, statistics, economics, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, agricultural economics, and mathematics and applied math.¹⁵ The students are a critical component of the future STEM workforce to advance innovation within American companies and industry.

International students and faculty are critical to the innovation that occurs with America's research universities. It is estimated that 75 percent of the patents awarded to the nation's top ten patent-producing research universities had an international student, faculty or researcher among the team filing the patent.¹⁶ Michigan was home to three universities on the National Academy of Inventors (NAI) 2024 Top 100 Index ranking universities by patent production.¹⁷ The University of Michigan was ranked 8th on the list with 160 patents. Michigan State University was ranked 36th on the list with 60 patents. Wayne State University was 76th on the list with 22 patents. International students and faculty are critical to these universities, and, in fact, these universities alone host 18,550 F-1 students, accounting for 48.6 percent of all the state's international students.

This research function is significant to the Michigan economy. Collectively, Michigan's four largest research universities—University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Wayne State University and Michigan Tech—are Michigan's largest employer, employing more than 71,000 residents.¹⁸ The research and development of these universities contributes nearly \$3 billion to the state's economy. These proposed rules threaten to severely restrict the supply of talent upon which these institutions thrive.

International student graduates go on to launch some of the most important and valuable startup companies in the U.S., having founded or co-founded approximately 25 percent of all U.S. unicorns (143 of the 582 companies), startup companies backed by venture capital with market valuations in excess of \$1 billion.¹⁹ They also contribute to a disproportionate number of U.S.-won Nobel Prizes in science.

II. Recommendations

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Partnership for a New American Economy (June 2012) found at <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/sites/all/themes/pnae/patent-pending.pdf>

¹⁷ National Academy of Inventors (April 2025) found at <https://academyofinventors.org/2024-top-100-us-universities-announced-by-the-national-academy-of-inventors/>

¹⁸ Research Universities for Michigan found at <https://miresearchuniversities.org/data-portfolio/economic-impact/>

¹⁹ National Foundation for American Policy (July 2022) found at <https://nfap.com/research/new-nfap-policy-brief-immigrant-entrepreneurs-and-u-s-billion-dollar-companies/>

1. Scrap the Rule and Study the Projected Private Sector Economic Impacts, as well as Provide Better Research on the Alleged Security Threats Posed by Overstays

When new federal agency policies will have the negative economic impacts of the type, scope and character of that of the Duration of Status proposed rule they must be developed through new public regulations promulgated in compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act. The Department of Homeland Security must not ignore significant, non-speculative costs to the American economy, America and Americans. These economic impacts will be particularly acute to the industries like the automotive and mobility sectors, manufacturing and higher education—some of the most significant employers in the Michigan economy.

The alleged rationale and study of the security risks of current international student monitoring policies for this rule seems woefully inadequate to justify this economic burden. There is little evidence that the current SEVIS system implemented in response to the 9/11 Commission has failed to protect national security. DHS has identified a problem that appears extremely limited in scope, noting that it has identified 2,100 F-1 students admitted between 2000 and 2010 that retained F-1 status in 2025. This represents less than 0.15 percent (15 of every 10,000 international students). For such a small number of students there could be valid reasons why they uniquely are enrolled so long after typical degree completion timetables. Nor does the proposed rule actually explain or identify actual security risks related to this overstay. It seems irrational that an F-1 visa holder seeking to harm U.S. national security would suddenly become a more significant danger after the four-year cap as opposed to posing a danger immediately upon entry.

We urge DHS to abandon this proposal or to develop a revised, less burdensome approach to establishing fixed periods of time for F-1 and J-1 visa holders that account for the realities of degree lengths and for the participation in the OPT STEM extension.

2. Lengthen the Duration of Status Caps Proposed by the Rule

The proposed four-year cap for F-1 students and J-1 exchange visitors is too short and would require a significant majority of international students and J-visa exchange visitors to seek an Extension of Stay although such students and visitors did nothing more than pursue the intended course of study and practical training allowed by law.

The proposed rule not only creates significant financial and time burdens—requiring filing fees, biometric data, possible interviews and maybe even require international students and scholars to hire legal representation—but promises endless delays, vast confusion, massive red tape and other burdens. The proposed rule projects nearly \$400 million in annual costs for federal administrators, international students, J-visa exchange visitors and foreign media to comply. This creates a huge federal bureaucracy that likely will require significant paperwork for hundreds of thousands of cases.

In short, the four- and two-year caps need to be extended to more accurately reflect the length of time that it takes to complete the programs for which international students and J-visa exchange visitors have been permitted entry. Nowhere in the rationale justifying the proposed rule, does DHS imply that all, or a majority, of those actively pursuing their studies, practical training or research need this heightened level or monitoring and by requiring an excessive number of them to seek an Extension of Stay, DHS proposes to create a massive regulatory burden on itself. Instead, F-1 student Duration of Status time

caps should be adjusted to include OPT and STEM OPT Extension periods. J-1 visa Duration of Status time caps should be extended to five years. Doctoral program caps also should be adjusted to six years. Additionally, some reasonable time for degrees that take longer than anticipated should be built in or a waiver from the Extension of Stay requirement should be built in for students who, for example, needed to extend studies for a change in major, sought a redshirt year as a college athlete, needed a semester-long break for a medical issue, etc.

3. Eliminate the Reduction in F-1 Students' Grace Period

The proposed rule would cut the F-1 grace period in half, from 60 to 30 days. Under existing regulations, F-1 students are provided 60 days following the completion of their studies and any practical training to prepare for departure from the United States. The proposed rule would reduce this post-completion grace period to 30 days giving international students less time to file extensions after completing their studies or training, prepare for departure, or change status increasing pressure on both students and university advisers.

Reducing the F-1 grace-period from 60 days to 30 days may cause some international students who otherwise might seek OPT employment to forego the opportunity to enter the U.S. workforce. Thirty days is a very limited period to complete one's lease, prepare to move and wrap up one's studies. Many international students are understandably focused on their academic requirements until the end of their final semester.

The F-1 grace period should remain 60 days. There is no evidence offered that the extra 30 days are somehow used—after several years of study—to threaten national security, avoid authorities or otherwise abuse the F-1 visas. Those seeking to engage in those activities would have ample time to do so *before* the grace period is ever triggered. This proposed reduction will only impact those F-1 students playing by the rules and appears arbitrary, capricious and mean-spirited to a population that contributes \$43.8 billion to the American economy annually.

4. Extend the Comment Period to 60 Days

The proposed changes to the Duration of Status rules should allow for a 60-day comment period. The proposed rule indicates that it will cost more than \$300 million per year to implement and will impose tens of millions of dollars of costs on private actors. The proposed rule adopts sweeping time caps for over one million international student and J-visa exchange visitors and changes decades of practice. Given the significant impacts and the sweeping complexity with which the proposed rule will interact with F, J and I visa policies, there should be at least a 60-day comment period. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the rulemaking process.

Respectfully submitted,