

November 22, 2011

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: **RETAINING U.S.-EDUCATED STEM STUDENTS – IMMIGRATION REFORM PRINCIPLES**

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Conyers:

As representatives of America's business community, high-tech companies, universities, cities, and technology professionals, the undersigned organizations urge Congress to move quickly to reform America's employment-based visa system for the highly educated. Doing so would strengthen the American economy, improve the competitiveness of American employers, and create jobs for Americans at all levels of employment.

Students who earn Master's or Ph.D. degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields from American universities are sought after by employers all over the world because they are job creators. They have the skills and talents to innovate, expand, and prosper.

We agree that legislation to welcome international students who have earned STEM graduate degrees in the U.S. should be based on firm principles benefiting both the American economy and the American public.

First: Job creation is paramount. STEM graduate degree holders from American universities recognized by the Higher Education Act are in a unique position to create American jobs and help keep jobs in this country.

Second: It isn't just Ph.D.'s – skilled STEM immigrants with Master's degrees are essential to American business in a variety of sectors in order to base global product development, manufacturing, and other platforms in the U.S. These are not the only skill sets critical to the U.S. economy, but STEM graduate degree holders educated and trained in America are an identifiable group that have a direct impact on job creation and retention.

Third: We need more green cards for these job creators. These are individuals who have already developed familiarity with American culture, business and research practices, and entrepreneurial spirit through their training and research at America's universities. Instead of collecting on this investment, we send these graduates away to compete against us. This costs American jobs and puts U.S. businesses at a competitive disadvantage in the long term – instead, there should be sufficient green cards to encourage these graduates to remain here, with their spouses and children.

Fourth: Congress should deregulate the process used to provide green cards to individuals earning STEM graduate degrees from legitimate U.S. institutions where the individuals have job offers related to their degrees. Employers who have offered positions to qualifying individuals,

or already lawfully employ them, based on the quality of the individuals' skill set and STEM graduate training in the United States, should be the filter to identify which STEM graduates are sponsored for green cards.

Fifth: The United States must expand domestic sources of talent, and companies and organizations are strongly committed to dedicating resources toward improving education and specifically promoting STEM education in the U.S. The demand for these skills continues to increase and we believe encouraging more young Americans to choose careers in those fields is essential to a strong economy.

We call on Congress to act quickly on this issue by passing legislation welcoming international students into the workforce who earn STEM advanced degrees at U.S. institutions of higher education. Doing so would strengthen the American economy rather than educating the competition.

Sincerely,

American Council on International Personnel
Association of American Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Business Roundtable
Compete America
Information Technology Industry Council
IEEE-USA
National Association of Manufacturers
Partnership for a New American Economy
Semiconductor Industry Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Cc: Members of the House Committee on the Judiciary