September 8, 2021

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Chairman
House Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chairwoman
House Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Nadler and Chairwoman Lofgren:

As you move forward with your efforts to develop legislation in response to the 2022 budget resolution and reconciliation instructions, the undersigned organizations urge you to include provisions aimed at improving our ability to attract and retain international STEM talent, which we know is key to our global leadership in science, technology, and innovation. **Specifically, we request that you create additional EB visas specifically for international students who earn, or previously earned, advanced STEM degrees in the United States. These talented individuals should also be exempt from any per-country cap.** In addition to the visa fees providing an increase in federal revenue, welcoming international STEM students and professionals with advanced STEM degrees into our workforce and nation as permanent legal residents will have a significant beneficial impact on our economy.

Foreign-born STEM professionals are critical to the US R&D ecosystem, economy and society. They bring fresh perspectives, diverse experiences, expertise, new ideas, and creativity to our universities, laboratories and companies. For example, as of 2018, immigrants had founded more than half (50 of 91) of the privately held billion-dollar startup companies in the United States, with 21 having a founder who first came to the United States as an international student. These global experts have created thousands of jobs with higher-than-average salaries for US workers, while boosting our country's competitiveness.

Continuing to attract international STEM talent is essential for US leadership across all emerging technology industries. From semiconductors and quantum information science to biotechnology and medical technology to agricultural technology and clean energy, nations that can attract the world's best and brightest will have a clear advantage in developing next-generation technologies.

Fortunately, we know how to attract international STEM graduate students to the United States. In a fall 2020 survey by the American Physical Society (APS) of its international students and early career scientists, nearly 90% of respondents agreed that they were "more likely to consider applying to graduate school or postdoc in a country that has a clear path for me to stay and work once I finish my degree or PhD."

But despite their importance to the US research enterprise and economy, current US visa and immigration policies put America at a disadvantage in the competitive race to recruit talented international STEM graduate students and professionals. While competitor nations are taking purposeful actions to attract international STEM graduate students and professionals to join their workforce as permanent residents, the United States is simply treading water.

Today's landscape is too competitive to ignore what the world's top STEM talent is seeking – a nation that welcomes them to study and, upon graduation, provides a clear path to citizenship, with a full and rewarding life and career. The United States needs 21st century visa and immigration policies that will attract and retain top global talent for its 21st century workforce. Creating visas to allow international students and scholars who earn, or previously earned, an advanced STEM degree from a US institution to be immediately eligible for an employment-based green card upon graduation is an essential step for the US to remain a global leader in science, technology and innovation.

Thank you for considering our recommendation. We look forward to working with you to ensure the United States remain the destination of choice for global STEM talent. If you have questions or would like to further discuss this issue, please do not hesitate to contact IEEE-USA Director of Government Relations Russell Harrison (r.t.harrison@ieee.org; 202.530.8326) or APS Director of Government Affairs Mark Elsesser (elsesser@aps.org; 202.662.8710).

Sincerely,

American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Astronomical Society
American Chemical Society
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Institute of Physics
American Mathematical Society
American Meteorological Society
American Physical Society
American Psychological Association
American Society for Cell Biology
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene
American Statistical Association
American Thoracic Society
Association for Psychological Science
Biophysical Society
Botanical Society of America
Coalition for the Life Sciences
Council of Scientific Society Presidents
Ecological Society of America
Federation of American Scientists
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences
IEEE-USA
Materials Research Society
National Science Policy Network
OSA-The Optical Society
SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics