

June 26, 2020

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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
US House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
US House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and
Minority Leader McCarthy:

The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) represents 102 premier academic and freestanding cancer centers in the United States and Canada. Our cancer center members are deeply concerned about the recent presidential actions to suspend visa processing for individuals from China and for certain categories of high-skilled, non-immigrant visas from around the world. We are gravely concerned about the impact of these policies on our research infrastructure during the current COVID-19 public health emergency and economic crisis, which have already slowed efforts at institutions treating Americans with cancer. J-1, F-1, and H-1B visas are critical tools that cancer centers use to attract top talent in scientific research and patient care to the United States.

AACI cancer centers recruit and employ the best and brightest scientific researchers, and a significant percentage of these researchers are foreign-born. According to data from 2013, over 40 percent of the researchers at the leading seven cancer research centers in the U.S. are foreign-born, hailing from more than 50 countries. The leading country of origin for cancer researchers is China.

Foreign nationals working in cancer research facilities typically include physicians, researchers, research technicians, information technology specialists, and lab technologists. When sponsoring cancer researchers through the labor certification/green card process, cancer centers incur the same costs and time as other employers. During this critical period, cancer centers should be focusing their time and resources in support of policies that foster innovation and economic growth and that promote the health and safety of the American people. Prohibiting the entry of valued STEM students, postdoctoral associates, scientists, and researchers does not address our nation's public health needs or stimulate economic recovery.

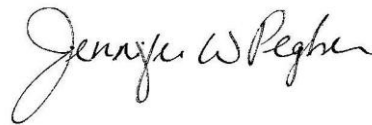
Cancer does not heed borders. This complex collection of diseases does not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, or country of origin. Working through the universal language of science, our cancer centers thrive and make progress within an international community of thought leaders to advance groundbreaking cancer research. Americans benefit when we open our doors and welcome talent from around the world.

We ask that you urge the Trump administration to reconsider implementing these policies at a challenging time for the medical research community, and to affirm that non-immigrant individuals engaged in medical research and medical practice are not subject to these or other visa restrictions, no matter their country of origin. AACI cancer centers are working tirelessly to return to pre-COVID-19 research conditions and placing limitations on new non-immigrant visas only serves to impede progress against cancer. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Roy A. Jensen'.

Roy A. Jensen, MD
President, AACI Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jennifer W. Pegher'.

Jennifer W. Pegher, MA
Executive Director, AACI