



September 19, 2013

Dear New Jersey Congressional Delegation:

As leaders of New Jersey's universities educating the next generation of entrepreneurs, scientists, and global pioneers, we call on you to address a critical threat to America's preeminence as the center of innovation and prosperity: our inability under current United States immigration policy to retain and capitalize on the talented individuals we are training in our universities.

Fixing our immigration system will be critical to scientific growth at New Jersey's universities and economic growth in our state. In 2009, 51 percent of the students earning Master's or PhDs in STEM fields from New Jersey's research-intensive universities were temporary residents, a group with no clear path to stay in America after graduation. 70 percent of our students earning engineering PhDs in recent years were also non-citizens.

Foreign-born students create jobs for New Jersey and often provide the technological innovations that drive economic growth in the state. A recent study by the Partnership for a New American Economy and the American Enterprise Institute found that for every 100 foreign-born graduates of a US Master's or PhD program who stay in America working in a STEM field, 262 jobs are created for American workers. But in New Jersey, our share of foreign-born STEM advanced degree holders working in STEM fields decreased by 17 percent between 2000 and 2010.

Our students often go on to start companies, which support communities and create jobs. Immigrants are more than twice as likely to start a business and immigrant-owned businesses in New Jersey generate about \$6.2 billion in income for the state each year.

New Jersey is already making significant investments in our higher educational institutions, and ultimately our future workforce, through the \$750 million Building Our Future bonds approved by the voters last November, plus almost \$567 million made available from other capital facilities bond programs. This total of over \$1.3 billion is the first significant investment in higher education facilities in New Jersey in 25 years. These capital investments will help attract the best students to New Jersey from around the world for training in engineering, sciences, and technology. But our outdated immigration policy prevents them from staying here after graduation. In effect, we are forcing our newly trained innovators and entrepreneurs to invest, build businesses, and create jobs outside of the United States.

Our educational institutions thrive when all of New Jersey's industries thrive and research shows that passing immigration reform will benefit all sectors of the state's economy. Our \$987 million agriculture sector needs workers in order to grow and expand. Immigration reform would mean more jobs for U.S. citizens and immigrants and greater production capacities for the state's agricultural businesses. In the housing sector, immigrants increased home values in New Jersey between 2000 and 2010 – by \$3,715 for the median home in Bergen County.

Many of our future bright students came to this country as children and have been unable to take advantage of an American education and contribute to our economy because of their status. A recent study found that incentivizing these children to pursue college education by passing the DREAM Act would add 1.4 million jobs and generate \$329 billion in economic activity over the next 20 years. In fact, creating a pathway to citizenship for all undocumented immigrants will have a positive effect for New Jersey's economy. According to a study by Regional Economic Models, Inc., for every person who enrolls, an estimated \$3,117 will be added to our Gross State Product by 2020.

Our current immigration system creates real obstacles to growth. Low limits on high-skilled visas leave immigrants with no way to stay after earning a diploma or they face untenable delays for a permanent visa. Low limits on low-skilled visas leave farmers struggling to find the workers they need to produce and grow. Meanwhile, too many people are living in the shadows unable to join our workforce, gain an education, and contribute to the economy they live in while we face real worker shortages and slow economic growth. For example, according to the nonpartisan advocacy group Change the Equation, from 2009 to 2011 1.4 STEM jobs were posted online in New Jersey for every one unemployed STEM worker in the state.

New Jersey cannot afford to wait to fix our immigration system. With last fall's passage of major capital investments for our state's colleges and universities, New Jersey demonstrated what can happen when businesses, labor, higher education, and political leaders of all stripes work together to keep our state competitive for the future. We ask you to work together to develop a comprehensive, bipartisan solution because all parts of our economy – from education to agriculture to housing to business – need it. Recent polls show that 62 percent of New Jersey voters support the Senate's comprehensive immigration reform bill, while 87 percent believe it is important we fix our immigration system this year. Now is the time for Washington leaders to act and ensure that the US can continue to compete on the global stage.

Sincerely,

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