



September 19, 2013

Dear New York Congressional Delegation:

As leaders of New York'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 a 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 progress at New York's universities and economic growth in our state. In 2009, 53 percent of the students earning master's or PhDs in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields from New York's research-intensive universities were temporary residents, a group with no clear path to stay in America after graduation. Almost 70 percent of our students earning engineering PhDs in recent years also have been non-citizens.

International students create jobs for New York 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 stays in America working in a STEM field, 262 jobs are created for American workers. In New York, that translates into a significant employment boost: our share of foreign-born advanced degree holders working in STEM fields grew by 42 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 York generate about \$12.6 billion in income for the state each year.

Our educational institutions thrive when all of New York's industries thrive, and research shows that passing immigration reform will benefit all sectors of the state's economy. Our \$4.4-billion agriculture sector needs workers in order to expand. Immigration reform would mean more jobs for U.S. citizens and immigrants and greater production capacities for our farmers. In the housing sector, immigrants increased home values in New York between 2000 and 2010 – by \$6,716 for the median home in Bronx County.

Many bright undocumented students were brought to this country as children and have been unable to take advantage of an American college education and contribute to our economy because of their status. According to a study by Regional Economic Models, Inc., for every person who enrolls in college, an estimated \$6,006 will be added to our Gross State Product by 2020. Another recent study found that encouraging undocumented children to pursue higher 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 York's economy.

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 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, 1.7 STEM jobs were posted online in New York for every one unemployed STEM worker in the state.

The nation and New York State cannot afford to wait to fix our immigration system. 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. Now is the time for Washington leaders to act and ensure that the US can continue to compete on the global stage.

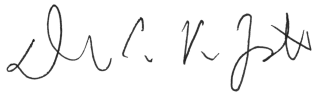
Sincerely,



David J. Skorton
President,
Cornell University



Erik J. Bitterbaum
President
SUNY Cortland



David Van Zandt
President,
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