

September 19, 2013

Representative Rob Bishop
123 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Jason Chaffetz
2464 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Chris Stewart
323 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Jim Matheson
2211 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bishop, Representative Stewart, Representative Chaffetz, and Representative Matheson:

As leaders of Utah's universities and colleges, 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 Utah's universities and economic growth in our state. In 2009, 29 percent of the students earning Master's or PhDs in STEM fields from Utah's research-intensive universities were temporary residents, a group with no clear path to stay in America after graduation. More than half of our students earning engineering PhDs in recent years were also non-citizens.

These foreign-born students are not taking seats from Utah residents, or even American students. We quite simply cannot find enough students from Utah or other states who are interested in our STEM programs to meet the demands of businesses in the area. Even as we continue to work toward encouraging more Utah residents to enter these programs, there is no risk of these students being prevented from enrolling because Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) schools have no enrollment caps.

Foreign-born students create jobs for Utah 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. In Utah, that translates into a significant employment boost: our share of foreign-born STEM advanced degree holders working in STEM fields grew by 72 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 Utah generate about \$388 million in income for the state each year.

Our educational institutions thrive when all of Utah's industries thrive and research shows that passing immigration reform will benefit all sectors of the state's economy.

Our \$1.4 billion 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 our farmers. In the housing sector, immigrants increased home values in Utah between 2000 and 2010 – by \$3,135 for the median home in Salt Lake 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 Utah's economy. According to a study by Regional Economic Models, Inc., for every person who enrolls, an estimated \$6,270 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 almost 1.5 STEM jobs were posted online in Utah for every one unemployed STEM worker in the state.

Utah 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. Recent polls show that 71 percent of Utah voters support the Senate's comprehensive immigration reform bill, while 90 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,

David W. Pershing, Ph.D.
President, University of Utah

Charles A. Wight
President, Weber State University

Scott L. Wyatt
President, Snow College

Stephen D. Nadauld, Ph.D.
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