

NEW YORK
STATE
SENATE



SENATOR RACHEL MAY
53RD SENATE DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senator Rachel May Leads NY Senate Letter to ICE on Behalf of International Students

Syracuse, NY - Today, Senator Rachel May (D-Onondaga, Madison, Oneida) sent a letter to the U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) Acting Director Matthew Albence, expressing outrage and disappointment at the latest guidance from the agency on international college students. The letter strongly encourages the agency to reverse its decision and extend the previous policy of allowing international students to enjoy the same privileges their classmates enjoy by taking online classes at their home institutions during this crisis.

The guidance would force holders of F-1 and M-1 student visas to transfer institutions or leave the country if they are enrolled at universities and colleges offering online-only courses. This guidance provides *no* benefit to public health or economic growth. In fact, the opposite is true -- in the midst of an unprecedented public health and economic crisis, this misguided attempt to force international students out of the country will cause further harm. The United States hosts more than 1 million international students annually. In 2019 alone, New York's colleges and universities welcomed 124,000 of these students. NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, estimates that international students studying in the US generate \$40 billion in economic activity and support more than 400,000 jobs annually. International students also contribute substantially to the continued viability of colleges and universities.

“My district is home to 9 institutions of higher education,” **said Senator May**. “Students come to Central New York from all over the world to take advantage of our tremendous educational resources. Not only is this decision particularly cruel to the thousands of international students who reside here, but it is also short-sighted and damaging for both our economy and society. I urge the Acting Director to reconsider this decision and allow our international students to enjoy the same privilege of being at their home institutions while taking online classes.”

The letter was signed by 30 New York State Senators.

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**THE SENATE
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July 7 2020

Mr. Matthew Albence
Acting Director
US Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Acting Director Albence,

We are New York State Senators representing districts from across the Empire State. We write to you today to express our outrage and disappointment at the latest guidance from your agency. This guidance would force holders of F-1 and M-1 student visas to transfer institutions or leave the country if they are enrolled at universities and colleges offering online-only courses. Many currently enrolled students will be forced to alter their plans significantly or be forced to leave the country outright because of your agency's decision. This guidance provides *no* benefit to public health or economic growth. In fact, the opposite is true -- in the midst of an unprecedented public health and economic crisis, this misguided attempt to force international students out of the country will cause further harm.

According to the Institute of International Education, more than one million international students study in the United States each year. In 2019 alone, New York's colleges and universities welcomed 124,000 of these students. These students bring innumerable benefits to our communities. NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, estimates that international students studying in the US generate \$40 billion in economic activity and support more than 400,000 jobs annually. International students also contribute substantially to the continued viability of colleges and universities. Many international students go on to start businesses in the United States, generating significant opportunity for our country.

The damage inflicted by this guidance is not simply economic. The greatest benefits of international education result from cultural exchange and expanded knowledge. We often think of study abroad as the primary mechanism for cultural exchange, but it is a two-way road. New York's college towns are greatly enriched by the presence of students from around the world. The benefits of diverse classrooms and communities are well established. A more diverse campus promotes greater creativity and innovation and enhances decision-making and problem-solving skills. Diverse campuses also help to prepare *all* students for their future careers, where many students will join a large and diverse workforce.

New York is home to one of the most robust higher education systems in the world. As state senators, we are extremely proud of our state's educational legacy and the contribution it has made to the United States in any field you can name: science, technology, entrepreneurship, policy, fashion, journalism, the arts, and much, much more. Efforts at the federal level to restrict international education will hurt us all. We strongly encourage you to reverse this decision and extend the previous policy of allowing international students to enjoy the same privileges their classmates enjoy by taking online classes at their home institutions during this crisis. We will also strongly encourage Congress to work immediately to reverse this policy.

Respectfully,



Rachel May
New York State Senator, 53rd District

Senator Toby Ann Stavisky 16th District	Senator Michael Gianaris 12th District	Senator Velmanette Montgomery 25th District
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Senator James Gaughran 5th District	Senator Jessica Ramos 13th District	Senator Todd Kaminsky 7th District
Senator Andrew Gounardes 22nd District	Senator Robert Jackson 31st District	

cc:

The Honorable Chad Wolf, Acting Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand, Member, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Members of New York's Congressional Delegation

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