

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2004

9.16.2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington D.C. 20003

Mr. President,

We write today to express concern with the continuation of Proclamation 10052, issued on June 22, 2020, suspending and limiting the entry of J visa applicants participating in the programs enumerated in the proclamation. We urge you to direct the Secretary of State to categorically exempt the J-Visa Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) from the ban if it can be demonstrated that the national interest exemption for economic recovery is met, given the large number of unfilled jobs for EVP host businesses and the threat to economic recovery such unfilled jobs pose. Further, we strongly believe the public diplomacy goals of the program continue to be met and that Exchange visitors are not taking positions for which American workers are able and willing to perform.

The Exchange Visitor public diplomacy program has a long track record of success, strengthening the national security interests of the United States and broadening our nation's public diplomacy reach. It does so by enabling a diverse pool of college and university participants to have access to these enriching exchange experiences because they are enabled to work while in the United States, making the programs affordable to a broader, more diverse, group of international visitors. This work component enhances the public diplomacy goals of the US, while also benefiting the more than 5,000 small businesses across the country who partner with the State Department and designated Sponsors to work with these students each year.

We too are concerned by the nation's high unemployment rate and believe Proclamation 10014's suspension of J visas will instead hamper the goal of putting Americans back to work, do long term damage to the public diplomacy and national security interests of the J-Visa EVP, and jeopardize the health of small businesses across the country.

While the unemployment rate is high, unemployment is not evenly distributed throughout the country. The majority of J-Visa exchange visitors are placed in remote areas working with seasonal businesses such as summer camps, amusement parks, and ski resorts. These businesses are often located in areas where the local population is small, but the seasonal influx of visitors is high. Travel and tourism businesses are amongst the hardest hit by the pandemic. Seasonal businesses, in particular, must rely on

every day of their relatively short seasons to recoup for the time in which they were closed due to pandemic related health concerns. Even when open, they are required to operate at less than 100 percent capacity.

The temporary and seasonal jobs that these exchange visitors perform are not jobs which unemployed Americans are going to leave their homes to work in for a few months. –What is important to remember is that these businesses not only have important seasonal employment needs, but they support full time and permanent jobs in the areas in which they are located. However, if they cannot fully staff their businesses during their “high seasons,” the full-time permanent jobs they support will be at risk – adding to our already high unemployment rate.

This is not a usual year and the EVP program will not operate in the manner and with the volume of exchange visitors it has in the past. However, the degree to which exchange students typically impact our local economies, approximately \$500 million annually, sustain employment for Americans in our local businesses, shop in our stores, eat in our restaurants, rent local accommodations, and allow American families to work outside the home, is significant and should not be jeopardized.

We urge you and the Secretary of State to exempt the exchange visitor programs where they can show that the public diplomacy goals are being met and that the positions are not displacing able and willing American workers. If you have any questions about this matter please contact Andrew Nelson in Congressman Keating’s office at Andrew.Nelson@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



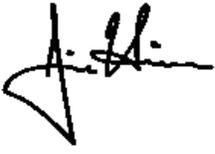
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Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



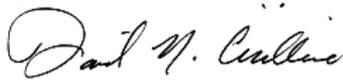
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