March 22, 2022

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
2132 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member, House Judiciary Committee
2056 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, Chairman Nadler, and Ranking Member Jordan,

On behalf of the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) and the undersigned organizations, we wanted to express our appreciation for Congress’ recent work on the United States Innovation and Competition Act (S. 1260) and the America COMPETES Act of 2022 (H.R. 4521). These bills are integral to increasing the United States’ domestic competitiveness and present a unique opportunity for investments in the STEM education and workforce ecosystem. While there are many provisions of the competitiveness package that we support, we write today to thank the House Judiciary Committee for its immigration provisions in the America COMPETES Act and encourage Congress to include the Section 80303 from H.R. 4521, or something similar such as Senator Durbin’s Keep STEM Talent Act of 2022 (S.3638), in the final conference package. Allowing doctoral, and in the case of critical industries, master’s students with STEM degrees to be exempt from caps on green cards and providing for dual intent to streamline the visa process will strengthen our global competitiveness by making it easier for the best and brightest scientists from around the world to conduct their careers in the United States.

In addition to being supportive of Section 80303 from H.R. 4521, we encourage the definition of STEM programs eligible for the green card cap exemption to be expanded to include all of the Department of Homeland Security’s STEM Designated Degree Program List. Expansion of the definition of eligible STEM degrees would increase the number of professionals able to stay in the United States and contribute to our innovation ecosystem. Additionally, we urge Congress to broaden the list of eligible institutions to include all accredited public and non-profit institutions. The current eligibility requirements restrict the waiving of the green card cap to graduates of institutions based on research expenditures or Minority-Serving Institutions with very high or high levels of research activity as determined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. These requirements leave out talented graduates from many institutions across the United States and should be broadened to capture the full international STEM talent pool.

The American system of higher education attracts the best and brightest students and scientists from around the world, who contribute mightily to our economy and innovation ecosystem. The member institutions of ASEE and the other undersigned organizations greatly benefit from the talent, intelligence, work ethic, and diversity of thought that international faculty and students bring to their
camps. We are excited by the inclusion of Section 80303 in H.R. 4521, as it would make it easier for STEM graduates to stay in the United States after graduation and use their skills and education to contribute to our national innovation, economic development, and security, and hope to see Section 80303 included in the final conference legislation.

Sincerely,

The American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE)
American Anthropological Association
American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering
American Mathematical Society
American Physical Society
American Psychological Association
American Sociological Association
American Society of Agronomy
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Society of Plant Biologists
Association for Materials Protection and Performance
Association for Women in Mathematics
Biophysical Society
Council of Graduate Schools
Council of Scientific Society Presidents
Crop Science Society of America
Duke University
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
INFORMS
Materials Research Society
Minerals, Metals & Materials Society
New York University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics
Soil Science Society of America
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research
UCLA
University of Maryland, College Park
University of New Hampshire
University of Oregon