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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Organization: [National Association of Graduate-Professional Students](http://NationalAssociationofGraduate-ProfessionalStudents.org)

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Fairness Demands Prioritizing International Students When Processing Green Card Applications

On September 26th, 2019, Sen Dick Durbin (D-IL) objected to unanimous consent of the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act (S.386) “as written.” This comes one week after Sen. David Perdue (R-GA) opposed unanimous consent of the bill, and has since removed his opposition. S.386 aims to clear the backlog and reduce the loss of high skilled immigrant workers due to long wait times for green cards by implementing a more fair method of allocation. The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS) supports efforts to clear this backlog and reduce wait times. NAGPS is also supportive of legislative efforts aimed at retaining and cultivating international intellectual capital in the United States and believes this legislation could be improved **by amending it to prioritize applicants with advanced degrees from U.S. academic institutions** when processing green card applications.

Specifically, NAGPS believes efforts to increase fairness for immigrants should take into consideration the years of dedication shown by current and former international students. Many of them have been separated from their extended families for years, have laid down roots in our country, and have adopted not just our ways of living, but also our values and ideals. **Fairness demands that we recognize their sacrifice and contributions as well as the investment that taxpayers have dedicated to their training.** Fairness demands that we reserve spots for them.

International students contribute significantly and positively to our economy, our culture, and our scientific advancement and stature. In 2017-2018 alone, they **contributed \$39 billion** to the US economy and created or supported almost **half a million jobs**. According to the Institute of International Education, there are currently around 400,000 international graduate students enrolled in US institutions. These students are being trained to be experts in their respective fields, and the U.S. needs to implement policies that promote the retention of their expertise after graduation, and that allows them to continue to contribute to our society in a meaningful and integrated way.

NAGPS believes that Employment Based Green Card (EB-GC) allocations should give priority to those who have been educated and trained in our country. Specifically, we request that **half of all EB-2 visas be reserved annually for applicants who have (1) earned advanced degrees from the United States and (2) have spent at least 5 years in the country**. We refer to these reserved positions as domestically-earned EB-2 visas. We also request that **once the backlog for petitioners with domestically-earned EB-2 visas has cleared, priority for these visas will be given to others with US-earned advanced degrees, regardless of country of origin.**

We believe that any immigration legislation must include provisions that benefit our international graduate-professional students, who are not only an integral part of our economy and higher education, but also key influencers to our national success at a macro-level.

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