



August 22, 2018

**The Honorable Lee Francis Cissna
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20529**

Dear Director Cissna,

We are writing to express our strongest support for the continuation of the Employment Authorization for Certain Dependent Spouses Rule (H-4 visa rule). The H-4 visa rule allows workers and their families to continue to contribute to the diversity and ingenuity of our companies and communities. We urge you to reconsider revoking this rule that benefits the American economy.

H-4 visas are issued by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to immediate family members of H-1B visa holders who already legally reside in the U.S. As you know, H-1B visas allow foreign workers with special skills to work legally in the U.S. In 2015, President Obama issued an executive order that allowed the spouses of H-1B visa holders to be eligible to work in the U.S. Through this opportunity created by the H-4 visa, these families open businesses, create jobs, and strengthen our economy. Revoking H-4 visa holders' ability to work will be detrimental to our companies and the U.S. economy. There are more than 100,000 H-4 visa workers currently in the American workforce.¹

Internet Association (IA) represents over 40 of the world's leading internet companies. IA's mission is to foster innovation, promote economic growth, and empower people through the free and open internet. The internet industry makes up 6 percent of U.S. GDP. In order to continue to modernize and shape the internet, our companies rely on accessing talent from across the world.

The internet industry recognizes that immigrants help strengthen our economy. We are also committed to growing the pipeline of talent within the U.S. and training American workers to compete in the 21st century economy. Several IA members participated in President Trump's "Pledge to American Worker" event at the White House, committing to create more than 100,000 training opportunities for American workers.² That commitment represented only a portion of the opportunities the industry expects to create over the next 5 years. The industry and the economy at large, however, will still need access to the best and brightest talent globally to fill necessary high-skilled positions. Ending the H-4 work visa rule may create labor shortages and make American companies less attractive to high-skilled workers.

¹ "Number of Approved Employment Authorization Documents, by Classification and Basis for Eligibility." Accessed July 25, 2018. [https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports and Studies/Immigration Forms Data/BAHA/eads-by-basis-for-eligibility.pdf](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/BAHA/eads-by-basis-for-eligibility.pdf).

² Internet Association. "Internet Association Signs Pledge To America's Workers." News release, July 19, 2018. Accessed July 25, 2018. <https://internetassociation.org/internet-association-signs-pledge-to-americas-workers/>.



For example, there are 10 times more computing jobs available right now in the U.S. than there were students who graduated with computer science degrees in 2015.³ This gap is compounded by the fact that 81 percent of full-time graduate students studying electrical engineering and 79 percent studying computer science in the U.S. are international students.⁴ In order to work in the U.S., these students would need to return on employer-sponsored work visas. Foreign workers make up a critical part of the American workforce. This makes recruiting high skilled labor from around the world vital to ensure these jobs are filled and our economy continues to thrive.

The current green card system is backlogged due to arbitrary per-country caps on the number of employees allowed from individual countries. This makes it difficult for U.S. companies to recruit talent from countries that may have backlogs that would require an employee to wait several years for a green card.

Revoking the H-4 visa rule would make it even harder to recruit talent. It would also put the U.S. at a competitive disadvantage with neighboring countries. It is likely that H1-B visa workers in the U.S. will take jobs in other countries if their spouses cannot legally work here. Providing work authorization for spouses helps employers recruit and retain employees by mirroring existing policies in Canada and Australia.

H-4 visa holders are diverse, accomplished, and contribute greatly to American society and the economy. Women account for nine out of 10 of the over 100,000 H-4 visas issued annually.

Our companies have long recognized the necessity of access to talent from across the globe in bringing ingenuity and innovation to our country. We fully support allowing their family members to experience the same fulfillment and economic success.

We urge this administration to reconsider their position on H-4 visa work eligibility requirements to ensure certainty for our employees, their families, and the U.S. labor market.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Beckerman'.

Michael Beckerman
Chief Executive Officer
Internet Association

³ "Promote Computer Science." Code.org. Accessed July 25, 2018. <https://code.org/promote>.

⁴ "H-1B Visas By the Numbers: 2017-2018." Report. National Foundation for American Policy. Accessed July 25, 2018.