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May 11, 2020

Dr. Mung Chiang, Ph.D.  
Science and Technology Adviser to The Secretary  
Office of The Science and Technology Adviser  
U.S. Department of State  
725 17th Street NW  
Washington, D.C., U.S. 20006

Dear Dr Chiang:

My name is Matt Copel, and I currently serve as President of the Materials Research Society (MRS). Based in Warrendale, Pennsylvania, MRS is a scientific society comprised of over 14,000 researchers from academia, industry and government, and is a recognized leader in the advancement of interdisciplinary materials research. MRS members come from over 90 countries worldwide and are at the forefront of research and teaching in the fields of materials science, physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and engineering.

I write to request that you make an exception to the March 18, 2020 action that suspends review of routine visa applications in other countries. This action would have a deleterious effect on students submitting F-1 visa applications as they seek to advance their study here in the U.S. and the concomitant benefit to U.S. interests these students provide.

There are several reasons to consider this exception, including the fact that the majority of international students obtaining these visas pursue education in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and math) that are so vital to American innovation. Moreover, graduate (Master's and Ph.D.) programs in particular enroll high numbers of international students.

Additionally, international students in our nation's STEM graduate programs are a critical resource to the ecosystem of our university research laboratories. These labs, many are of which are funded by U.S. government agencies such as the National Institute for Health, underpin biomedical research necessary to develop therapies for many ailments, including COVID-19. Beyond their role in COVID-19-related research, international students are crucial to developing other areas of technological innovation that powers the U.S. economy. Simply put, international students (and a steady influx of them) are a critical part of the academic research model, which provides much of the technical know-how that is vital to the U.S.'s future recovery and growth.

The State Department's recent suspension of routine visa services at its embassies and consulates around the world is an understandable "first action" to focus on the health and welfare of our citizens and government employees abroad. However, interruption of the F-1 visa application process for foreign-born students jeopardizes the ability of academia to perform research that will keep our citizens healthy and promote the well-being of the U.S. Therefore on balance of these competing priorities, we urge resumption of F-1 visa processing for international students.

We look forward to a dialogue with you concerning this matter. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Damon Dozier, MRS Director of Government Affairs at 202.763.3814 or [dozier@mrs.org](mailto:dozier@mrs.org)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Copel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matt Copel  
Materials Research Society President