July 10, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Matthew T. Albence  
Deputy Director and Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
Washington D.C. 20536

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Deputy Director Albence:

As higher education leaders in Massachusetts, we were stunned by the recent July 6, 2020 guidance by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) regarding nonimmigrant F-1 and M-1 students. This rule change is cruel, irresponsible, and delivers more anxiety and confusion for international students in Massachusetts.

In March, due to the unexpected, unprecedented, and sudden transition to remote and online learning, many federal and state agencies provided regulatory and administrative flexibility to students and postsecondary institutions. In fact, SEVP rightfully provided an exemption for international students so they could continue learning and remain safe amidst a global pandemic – a crisis that is far from over.

We deeply value our international students, who are incredibly important to the cultural fabric of our institutions and the Commonwealth. The students also serve as major economic drivers in Massachusetts. During the previous 2018-2019 academic year, international students contributed $3.2 billion and supported more than 38,000 jobs in the Commonwealth’s economy (NAFSA: Association of International Educators). In Massachusetts, it’s clear that the thousands of international students are critical to the success of the higher education sector.

The decision by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to modify these exemptions threatens the futures of many international students amidst quite grim public health prospects over the next several months. We denounce these changes and urge the SEVP and ICE to reinstate the previous exemption for our students.

Sincerely,

Ellen L. Kennedy, President  
Berkshire Community College

James C. Mabry, President  
Middlesex Community College

Laura L. Douglas, President  
Bristol Community College

James Vander Hooven, President  
Mount Wachusett Community College

Pam Eddinger, President  
Bunker Hill Community College

Nate Bryant, Interim President  
North Shore Community College
John L. Cox, President  
Cape Cod Community College

Lane A. Glenn, President  
Northern Essex Community College

Yves Salomon-Fernandez, President  
Greenfield Community College

Luis Pedraja, President  
Quinsigamond Community College

Christina Royal, President  
Holyoke Community College

Valerie R. Roberson, President  
Roxbury Community College

Gena Glickman, President  
Massasoit Community College

John B. Cook, President  
Springfield Technical Community College

David Podell, President  
MassBay Community College

Frederick W. Clark Jr., President  
Bridgewater State University

F. Javier Cevallos, President  
Framingham State University

Francis X. McDonald, President  
Massachusetts Maritime Academy

Richard S. Lapidus, President  
Fitchburg State University

John Keenan, President  
Salem State University

Kymberly Pinder, Acting President  
Massachusetts College of Art and Design

Ramon S. Torrecilha, President  
Westfield State University

James F. Birge, President  
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Barry Maloney, President  
Worcester State University

Martin T. Meehan, President  
University of Massachusetts

Robert E. Johnson, Chancellor  
UMass Dartmouth

Kumble R. Subbaswamy, Chancellor  
UMass Amherst

Jacqueline F. Moloney, Chancellor  
UMass Lowell

Katherine S. Newman, Interim Chancellor  
UMass Boston

Michael F. Collins, Chancellor  
UMass Medical School

Carlos E. Santiago, Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

C:  
Members of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation  
Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges (MACC)  
Massachusetts State Universities Council of Presidents  
University of Massachusetts President’s Office  
Massachusetts Department of Higher Education