



June 10, 2020

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
United States Senate

Leader Kevin McCarthy
United States House of Representatives

Minority Leader Charles Schumer
United States Senate

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McCarthy, McConnell and Schumer:

The Optional Practical Training (OPT) program is an important recruitment tool for U.S. colleges and universities and a key workforce-building tool for American employers. As such, we write to urge Congress and the Administration not to scale back this vital program which helps employers innovate, create jobs for Americans and contribute to economic recovery efforts.

Foreign students accounted for 54% of master's degrees and 44% of doctorate degrees awarded in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields in the United States during the 2016-2017 school year.¹ Relatedly, Student and Exchange Visitor Information System data consistently demonstrates a concentration among all OPT graduates in STEM and business fields. Employers frequently utilize the OPT program so that these much-needed individuals can put their U.S. degrees to work for America.

SHRM members are helping businesses of all sizes rise to the economic and workforce challenges currently facing our country. As the focus shifts to safely reopening operations, employers need access to talent that will best reinvigorate the economy, which often means filling critical positions in STEM fields.

As the United States works toward recovery, now is not the time to restrict a program that helps businesses innovate, thrive, create jobs and fuel the American economy. We appreciate your support for this important program.

Sincerely,

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., SHRM-SCP
President & CEO

Emily M. Dickens
*Corporate Secretary, Chief of Staff &
Head, Government Affairs*

CC: All Members of Congress

¹ <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11347>