

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20451

Dear Secretary Noem and Secretary Rubio:

We write seeking information about the Department of State (DOS) and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) actions targeting international students for exercising their constitutional right to freedom of speech. We have heard concerns from constituents in Michigan about the impact of the Administration's actions on students and our universities. We call on you to immediately prioritize law enforcement actions that keep us safe, not those that threaten First Amendment protected activities, and to take steps to ensure student visas are not threatened or terminated due to students exercising their constitutional rights.

This Administration is implementing new policies to review student visa holders' social media accounts and other forms of protected speech, leading to visa revocations and green card rescissions. In some cases, arrests by plainclothes officers in unmarked vans, without visible law enforcement insignias have caused fear and panic and appear more like actions taken in authoritarian regimes in Russia and China.¹ Additionally, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) terminated visa records for thousands of students whose visas were not revoked, jeopardizing their ability to stay in the United States.

These visa records terminations included students who have legal visas to attend eleven universities across Michigan, including the Central Michigan University, Eastern Michigan

¹ Julia Ainsley, *Inside the DHS task force scouring foreign students' social media*, NBC News (Apr. 9, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/dhs-task-force-scouring-foreign-students-social-media-rcna198532>; see also Barbara Ortutay, *US immigration officials look to expand social media data collection*, AP (Mar. 30, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/social-media-immigration-applicants-handles-dhs-f67b480abebff7e451056be17572593d>; see also Marisa Kabas, *State. Dept. demands 'enhanced' social media vetting of student visa applicants*, The Handbasket (Mar. 26, 2025), <https://www.thehandbasket.co/p/state-dept-enhanced-social-media-vetting-student-visa-applicants>.

University, Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University, Oakland University, University of Michigan, and Wayne State University.² In many cases, neither the students nor the universities received any notice from either DOS or DHS about these records terminations.³ The chaotic way in which the Departments implemented these changes have sown confusion at Michigan universities and threatened students' ability to go to school and remain in the United States. In response to over one hundred lawsuits filed nationally, ICE reversed some of these records terminations on April 25, 2025, reportedly including about 70 Michigan students' records, though we have no way of confirming these reversals.

The ICE-led interagency task forces have reportedly detained international students in disturbing scenes that more closely resemble kidnappings than arrests. Michiganders should not need to wonder who the group of armed, masked individuals are that are surrounding them and whether they are being approached by criminals or law enforcement officers. Situations like those in Massachusetts and Virginia give criminals license to operate in the open, and future arrests carried out in this manner could easily escalate if a student or bystander uses self-defense against what they believe to be a kidnapping.

In addition to these international student visa terminations and arrests, the Administration is targeting the students' fundamental right to legal representation by intimidating lawyers who are representing these students. In a concerning episode on April 6, Amir Makled, an attorney from Dearborn, was detained for ninety minutes by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at the Detroit Metro Airport while on his way back from vacation with his family. Makled claims the CBP officers told him they knew he was an attorney and that he was taking on "big cases."⁴ According to reporting, the officers pressured Makled to hand over his cell phone and show CBP his contact list.⁵ Makled is currently representing a student demonstrator in criminal court.⁶ Law firms, including civil rights and immigration law firms, have also been the subject of executive orders and memos intended to intimidate and prevent them from challenging

² Max Reinhart, *Visas, legal residency status revoked for 22 UM students and recent grads*, The Detroit News (Apr. 10, 2025), <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/education/2025/04/09/visas-legal-residency-status-revoked-for-22-university-of-michigan-students-recent-grads/83016585007/>; see also Sophia Kalakailo, *Visas revoked for 2 Eastern Michigan international students* (Apr. 14, 2025), <https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2025/04/visas-revoked-for-2-eastern-michigan-international-students.html>; see also Ron Frenc, *Donald Trump restores student visas after revoking 70-plus in Michigan*, Bridge Michigan (Apr. 25, 2025), <https://www.bridgemi.com/talent-education/donald-trump-restores-student-visas-after-revoking-70-plus-michigan>.

³ Nick Lentz, *Visas of Central Michigan University of international students terminated by federal officials, school says*, CBS News (Apr. 7, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/amp/detroit/news/central-michigan-international-student-records-terminated-homeland/>.

⁴ Tresa Baldas, *Lawyer for U-M protester detained at airport after spring break trip with family*, Detroit Free Press (Apr. 7, 2025), <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/wayne/2025/04/07/lawyer-for-u-m-protester-held-at-airport-refused-to-give-feds-his-phone/82978891007/>.

⁵ Juana Summers, Tyler Bartlam, and Patrick Jarenwattananon, *Attorney Representing a student protester detained by federal immigration agents*, NPR (Apr. 9, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/04/09/nx-s1-5357455/attorney-detained-by-immigration-authorities>.

⁶ Tresa Baldas, *Lawyer for U-M protester detained at airport after spring break trip with family*, Detroit Free Press (Apr. 7, 2025), <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/wayne/2025/04/07/lawyer-for-u-m-protester-held-at-airport-refused-to-give-feds-his-phone/82978891007/>.

the Administration's illegal actions.⁷ If Americans, and other people legally present in our country, cannot challenge the federal government's actions, all of our rights are in peril.

In addition to the chaos and confusion, the surveillance and arrests of students exercising their freedom of speech are creating fear amongst students at Michigan universities. Reports indicate that international students admitted this spring to colleges and universities are rethinking their choices due to the visa revocations and deportations.⁸ We have serious concerns that the Administration's policies towards international students will deprive the United States of global talent that fuels innovation.

To help us better understand the issues we raise, we request answers from the Departments of State and Homeland Security to the following questions no later than May 29, 2025:

1. How many F, M, or J visas have been terminated for students at Michigan institutions of higher education since January 20, 2025? For each individual identified in response to this question, please provide the following information:
 - a) The reasons for terminating each of these visas.
 - b) How many individuals have been accused of, charged with, or convicted of criminal acts?
 - c) For those who have not been accused of criminal wrongdoing, what was the justification for termination?
 - d) Were any of these students informed by DHS or the DOS of their visa revocations? If so, when and how long were they given to voluntarily leave the country?
 - i) Of these students with terminated visas, how many still remain in the United States? How many of these students, if any, have been detained by ICE or other federal law enforcement agencies?
 - ii) Were any of them given the opportunity to contest their visa revocations? If so, how many?
2. How many visa records for students attending Michigan universities who hold (or previously held) F, M, or J visas were terminated from the SEVIS database since January 20, 2025?
 - a) How many of these students' records have been reinstated?
 - b) How many of these students still have valid F, M, or J visas?
 - c) What was the reasoning for terminating these records?
 - d) Were these students notified of their records termination?
3. What are the DHS's policies and procedures related to undercover officers participating in law enforcement actions to detain individuals?

⁷ American Immigration Lawyers Association, Policy Brief: Immigration Enforcement Actions Against International Students (Apr. 11, 2025), <https://assets.aila.org/files/48561fbf-1f5d-437b-87e4-7745758c4efb/25040804.pdf?1744136838>; see also Matthew Goldstein, *Two Law Firms File for Permanent Relief From Trump's Executive Orders* (Apr. 8, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/08/business/jenner-block-trump-filing.html>.

⁸ Susan Svrluga, Maham Javaid, and Mikhail Klimentov, *As Trump attacks higher education, some students avoid U.S. colleges*, The Washington Post (May 2, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/05/02/colleges-international-students-trump-visas-deportations/>.

- a) Does the Department or ICE have policies related to law enforcement agents wearing identifying markers or insignia while conducting arrests? If so, what are those policies? Please provide copies of those policies.
 - b) Does the Department or ICE have policies about whether law enforcement agents conducting arrests can or cannot wear masks? If so, what are those policies? Please provide copies of those policies.
4. What are DHS's policies and procedures related to the transfer of international student detainees to detention facilities far from their homes? Please provide copies of these policies.
 5. What are DHS's policies related to providing detainees with access to methods of communication with people outside of the detention center? Please provide copies of these policies.
 6. What trainings are provided to ICE officers and other federal agents who participate in immigration enforcement arrest and detention activities, including legal requirements to protect privacy, civil rights and civil liberties?
 7. What implementation guidance has the DOS provided for the cable titled "Enhanced Screening and Social Media Vetting for Visa Applicants"? Please provide copies of this guidance.
 8. What implementation guidance has the Department of Homeland Security provided for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) policies related to screening visa holders' social media accounts? Please provide copies of this guidance.
 9. The White House has said that some of these revocations were based on DHS intelligence.
 - a) Which DHS components provided this intelligence?
 - b) Please provided any policies or guidance related to the development of this intelligence.

Respectfully,



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator