



For Immediate Release
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AMIS urges Georgia Congressional Delegation to Call for Revoking ICE Directive

- The July 6, 2020 ICE directive issued by US Dept of Homeland Security is causing confusion and hardship for international students and increased workload for university administrators.
- It creates a message that international students are not welcome here.

Atlanta, GA – Today, AMIS (Atlanta Ministry with International Students, Inc) Executive Director, Rev. Irene Wong, sent letters to our Georgia senators and representatives in Congress to advocate for international students. A portion of the letter appears here:

*I am writing to urge you **to call for the rescinding of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) directive issued on July 6, 2020** that requires all international higher education students with F-1 or M-1 student visas in the US to return to their home countries if their institution moves to online learning in the fall of 2020.*

*This Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) directive places unnecessary and undue hardship on international students, many who are not able to travel back to their home countries because of **COVID-19 travel restrictions** and because of the closure of international airports. Our students from India have stated that because there are no flights back to India, they could not return to India if required.*

The message that this guidance sends is that international students are not welcome in our country when in fact, the presence of international students provides opportunities for global learning and bridge building. It is widely known that many current world leaders received higher education degrees as international students in the US.

This policy also puts an onerous administrative burden on higher education institutions related to issuing updated SEVIS and I-20 forms in the midst of the pandemic when they are already struggling to weigh the public health risks of returning to in-person instruction.

In the state of Georgia, the presence of 23,600 international students contributed \$850.6 million to our state economy and supported 10,250 jobs in 2018-2019 (nafsa.org/economicvalue).

About 16,000 international students are in the greater Atlanta area. AMIS supports international students at Georgia Tech, Georgia State, Emory, Kennesaw State, Oglethorpe, Spelman, Agnes Scott, Morehouse, Columbia Theological Seminary, Georgia Southwestern State, Beulah Heights, and others. We also welcome international students to Atlanta for our annual Christmas International House program from around the US from New York University, Kansas State University, Coe College, Southeast Missouri State University, University of Michigan and many others.

We implore you to act quickly to urge the US Department of Homeland Security to rescind the July 6 ICE guidance and take immediate legislative action to protect the immigration and SEVIS status of any international student who, due to a decision by their institution, must take some or all classes virtually during the 2020-21 academic year.

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AMIS (the French word for “friends”) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that has been serving international students for 42 years. Our mission is to promote global understanding through friendship and hospitality with international students in the greater Atlanta area. Each year we welcome and connect hundreds of international students with local American friends in the community through our programs and events such as the Amigo Friendship program, local tours and hikes, Thanksgiving, and Christmas International House. We partner with many Atlanta area churches, Kiwanis Clubs, community groups, international student offices, and over 200 volunteers and donors each year. Learn more at www.amis-inc.org.