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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

July 9, 2020

Hon. Andrew Cuomo
Governor,
State of New York
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12207

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As the Trump administration continues to target immigrants, we in New York need to continue to respond.

The recent ICE directive that would force foreign-born students with student visas to leave the country if their colleges are only offering remote classes is potentially devastating to individuals, their institution, and our society. These students have done nothing wrong. Like all of us, their lives have been severely disrupted due to the impact of COVID-19 and extenuating circumstances beyond their control. They have already complied fully with the requirements of their student visas in order to reside in the United States while attending school. And requiring them to return to their home country where internet services capable of enabling them to do distance learning may not be available is arbitrary and capricious, and fundamentally unjust. The federal Administration's announced policy smacks of meanness and anti-immigrant bias.

The harm to our higher education system will also be serious. Colleges and universities will undoubtedly lose tuition income. Thousands of students may not stay enrolled here even when regular classes resume.

Therefore, I am recommending that you act now to ensure that all CUNY campuses enroll these students in at least one in-person class for the coming semester, in order to protect them and CUNY from this reprehensible policy change. This action would permit those with student visas to remain here while they complete their college or graduate programs. I realize that this will require ingenuity and flexibility on the part of faculty and administrators, but the benefits will be immense and would set a precedent for governors across the nation.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President