

June 23, 2020

ASBMB statement on the presidential proclamation suspending foreign worker visas

The following is a statement from Benjamin Corb, public affairs director for the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology:

“On April 22, President Donald Trump suspended immigration, with a few exceptions, to the United States for 60 days under the pretense of protecting American workers whose jobs have been eliminated by COVID-19 shutdowns. The president on Monday extended this suspension through the end of the year. The new [presidential proclamation](#) suspends H1B, H2B, J, and L visas, primarily affecting tech workers, seasonal workers, and spouses of certain visas holders.

[We said it in April](#), and we’ll say it again today: This policy is detrimental to the American economy and in particular to the American research enterprise.

Science graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and interns will be adversely affected by this policy at a time when they are already facing unprecedented challenges and obstacles resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many colleges use the H-1B programs to hire faculty and postdoctoral students, especially in STEM fields. Higher education advocates have [voiced concerns](#) that this suspension will harm their ability to recruit international talent. It’s important to note that these students and postdoctoral researchers in STEM fields are filling an [unmet need for skilled science jobs](#); without them, the U.S. would face a shortage of science labor.

American science thrives on international collaboration, diversity and inclusion. Work being done in American laboratories at all levels depends on the importation of talented and skilled students and workers. The ASBMB is an international organization that represents thousands of researchers who hail from all over the world. Closing America’s borders to high-skilled workers and biomedical scientists, especially during a pandemic when we need all the creativity and expertise we can get, is wrong-minded and harmful to this country and its people.”