July 27, 2011

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Chairman 
Committee on the Judiciary 
Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees 
And Border Security 
United States Senate 
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Cornyn  
Ranking Member 
Committee on the Judiciary 
Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees 
And Border Security 
United States Senate 
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Schumer and Ranking Member Cornyn:

We applaud your committee’s efforts to draw attention to the economic benefits of immigration. As you recognize, immigration reform, especially high-skill immigration reform, can create jobs and spur economic growth. Specifically, we believe that allowing international graduate students to acquire an EB visa upon earning their degrees will have an immediate and significant beneficial impact on our economy.

Media coverage of immigration often emphasizes that employers and employees in a wide range of sectors such as high tech companies, manufacturing, services, finance, biotechnology, energy and health care, have different positions related issues, such as the H-1B temporary visa program. Yet that completely overlooks reform proposals we support. We are united in our belief that allowing highly educated immigrants who come here to study to stay and create jobs in America by becoming Americans themselves is vital to efforts to increase America’s competitiveness and create new jobs here at home.

In every cutting edge industry, from semiconductors to nanotechnology to green energy, foreign-born students come to America to learn, not just how to do the best jobs of the 21st century, but how to create them. We all agree that it does not serve America’s national interest to make these highly-talented individuals wait for 5 to 10 years to become legal immigrants, as many do under the current system. America loses far too many of these talented individuals to our overseas competitors. Individuals with their skills and training simply won’t subject their families and careers to this extended and uncertain limbo.

We support immediate action by the Congress to retain these graduates so that they can begin their careers in the STEM fields as legal permanent residents. At a time when job creation is the nation’s top priority, it is imperative that the U.S. act now to encourage these highly skilled individuals to remain in the United States. When they stay, their productivity creates new jobs for Americans and new businesses to fuel American prosperity. When they leave, their absence causes Americans to lose jobs as shortages force companies to move work abroad.
Make no mistake, other nations are working hard to attract this same talent to compete against U.S. based companies and workers. If Congress fails to act now, we will lose yet another class of talented innovators and the economic benefits of their work will go elsewhere.

We believe strongly that the conversation you begin today should lead quickly to the passage of legislation that will allow the United States to welcome this talent permanently into our workforce and nation as permanent legal residents and, soon thereafter, as citizens.

While other difficult problems remain, we believe that our agreement on green card reform reflects the kind of consensus that can be shared among your colleagues on both sides of the aisle. The urgency for job creation demands it. Congress needs to help international students who earn advanced degrees in STEM fields from American graduate schools smoothly transition to permanent residence. We hope that you will agree and move quickly to fix this problem.

Very Respectfully,

Brian Toohey
President,
Semiconductor Industry Association

Ron Jensen
President,
IEEE-USA