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March 23, 2007

Director  
Regulatory Management Division  
US Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20529

Reference: DHS docket number USCIS-2006-0044

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to urge you to reconsider the major immigration fee increase proposed through USCIS. The proposed fee increase raises costs by an average of 96%, for only a small decrease in processing times. These proposed fees are extremely high and will act as a disincentive for international students and scholars to study and work in the United States. The United States reaps immeasurable benefits from attracting the best and brightest minds from around the world and the next generation of international leaders to America's educational institutions.

We would like to see improvement in USCIS immigration services, with processes streamlined and made more transparent. Technologies and processes have not been implemented that would facilitate the effective and timely processing of cases. But financing the required modernization of USCIS systems should not come from fees because it prices statutory benefits out of the reach of those who need them.

While USCIS is permitted by law to recover its costs through fees, this is an untenable solution that will have unintended consequences. I ask that the fees be reduced to the actual cost of processing the application or petition. Congress must take responsibility for the modernization of USCIS and appropriate funds for this purpose. We want talented, well-intentioned people of the world to continue to look towards the United States as the premier provider of higher education and as a country that welcomes the diversity of experience and understanding that our international students and scholars bring to our institutions of higher learning. The US cannot remain competitive in a global economy without this international component.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca L. Johnson". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "R" and "J".

Rebecca L. Johnson

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and International Programs