



Homeland
Security

January 9, 2026

Senator Eric S. Schmitt
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schmitt:

Thank you for your November 14, 2025, letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding the Optional Practical Training program and related practical training benefits for F-1 student visa holders.

DHS is committed to ensuring that immigration programs operate in the interests of American workers and to protecting U.S. national security interests. We are aware of the significant increase in the number of foreign student visa holders engaged in practical training programs and the potential risks and challenges. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations Student and Exchange Visitor Program understands these difficulties and is taking action to mitigate vulnerabilities and address your concerns.

As you note, the Optional Practical Training program, and related practical training opportunities, are provided for in DHS regulations at 8 C.F.R. 214.2(f)(10) and were established through regulation rather than direct statutory text. Consistent with President Trump's direction and the administration's America First immigration policy, DHS is reevaluating whether the current regulatory framework –including the scope and duration of practical training – appropriately serves U.S. labor market, tax, and national security interests and remains aligned with congressional intent.

Additionally, DHS has indicated it intends to re-evaluate practical training regulatory requirements for foreign student visa holders through a rulemaking. This rulemaking proposal was included in the Spring 2025 Unified Agenda.¹ The rule would propose to amend existing practical training regulations to protect U.S. workers from being displaced by foreign nationals, address fraud and national security concerns, and enhance the Student and Exchange Visitor Program's capacity to oversee the program. Any rulemaking DHS proposes will be available for review and feedback after publication in the Federal Register.

¹ See Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Spring 2025 DHS Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions, *Practical Training*, RIN 1653-AA97, available at: <https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/eAgendaViewRule?pubId=202504&RIN=1653-AA97> (last visited September 30, 2025)

Senator Eric S. Schmitt
Page 2

Thank you again for your letter. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact the DHS Office of Legislative Affairs via email at (202) 447-5890.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kristi Noem", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the left.

Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security