

United States Senate

April 10, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

I am writing to commend your decisive actions to protect American jobs. I want to highlight a matter in desperate need of your attention: the Optional Practical Training (OPT) work permit program. These foreign student work permits not only harm the job prospects of recent college graduates, but are also abused by and create a serious national security risk from a self-declared enemy nation – Communist China.

Young American graduates are struggling to find jobs. In the past, recent graduates had a lower unemployment rate than the general population, but since 2020, this has no longer been the case.

STEM majors, in particular, are having trouble finding jobs. The jobless rate for recent graduates with computer engineering degrees is nearly double the general unemployment rate, and the unemployment rate for recent computer science graduates is over 50% higher than the general jobless rate.

Foreign competition is harming the job prospects of these young Americans. Right now, over half a million student visa holders have OPT work permits. OPT permits not only allow foreign students to compete with Americans for American jobs, but they also allow foreign nationals to stay in the U.S. on their student visas after graduation.

The OPT program also creates a very serious national security risk, especially from Communist China. The Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman has warned that the OPT program is “currently being used by government actors from countries such as [China] as a means of conducting espionage and technology transfer through some portion of the many thousands of foreign nationals who have obtained OPT employment in the United States.” Over 33,000 Chinese nationals hold special STEM OPT work permits that allow them to stay in the U.S. for the same length of time

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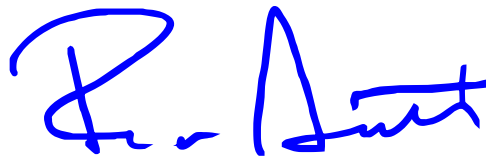
as an H-1B visa. Many OPT recipients from Communist China have jobs in universities and Big Tech firms, giving them access to sensitive technological information and intellectual property. We cannot continue opening the door to an enemy nation that will happily use our own research against us.

The OPT program should not exist; it is a purely regulatory creation with no statutory basis. In fact, the *Immigration and Nationality Act* is clear that a student visa is “solely” for education, not employment. The STEM OPT program was created by former Bush Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff as a scheme to evade H-1B caps after the *Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007*, which would have effectively eliminated H-1B visa caps, failed to pass. It blatantly goes around the annual caps on degree-based employment visas (i.e., H-1Bs) that Congress, the people’s representatives, put in place.

I was happy to see reports that your administration plans to act on the OPT issue. DHS recently announced that it “will amend existing regulations to address fraud and national security concerns, [and] protect U.S. workers from being displaced by foreign nationals,” and *Forbes* reported that the “upcoming Trump administration rule is expected to end or restrict Optional Practical Training.” I am eager to see this rule language.

Thank you again for your commitment to protecting American jobs and American families. I look forward to continuing to work with you and your administration to address these threats and keep Making America Great Again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott", written in a cursive style.

Rick Scott
United States Senator