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Administration Backs Off In-Person Class Requirement for International Students

Higher education groups and others are hailing a decision by the administration to rescind planned rules that would have required students in the United States on certain visas to attend class in person or return home. The reversal came during a hearing before a judge in Boston presiding over a challenge to the rules filed by more than a dozen states and spearheaded by Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey. Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology had also filed suit after Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced on July 6 it planned to publish a temporary final rule stating that “nonimmigrant F-1 and M-1 students attending schools operating entirely online may *not* take a full online course load and remain in the United States.” Healey called the proposed rule “senseless and illegal the minute it came out” and said that the “hundreds of thousands of international students across this country...enrich our institutions and strengthen our communities.” She vowed to “remain vigilant in protecting our international students from these harmful disruptions.”

Mary Sue Coleman, president of the Association of American Universities (AAU), also cheered the reversal. “I’m glad that the overwhelming outcry from America’s leading research universities, scientific research organizations, the business community, and others caused the administration to swiftly rescind this deeply misguided policy,” said Coleman. “Congratulations to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, whose lawsuit against ICE led to the settlement reversing the policy change. I also want to offer thanks to the University of California system, Johns Hopkins University, and other AAU member institutions who also filed suit or spoke out against this cruel and unjustified policy.” Echoing Healey, Coleman said AAU “will continue, during this unprecedented time of global pandemic, to be vigilant against efforts by the administration to harm international students or force universities into rushed and unreasonable decisions regarding in-person instruction.”

[Link to initial ICE rule announcement](#)

[Link to Healey statement](#)

[Link to AAU statement](#)

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