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Director, Student and Exchange Visitor Program
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20536

VIA EMAIL: Rachel.e.canty@ice.dhs.gov

Re: Request for special student relief for students from Ukraine

Dear Director Canty:

We hope that you and your team are well. We are writing today to request that the Department of Homeland Security - SEVP consider granting Special Student Relief* to F-1 students from Ukraine in response to the recent invasion of their country and the resulting crisis. A [February 22, 2022 announcement](#) from Department of State indicates that consular services in Ukraine remain closed. President Biden [remarked](#) on February 24, 2022 that “The Russian military has begun a brutal assault on the people of Ukraine without provocation, without justification, without necessity,” and the Department of State [Ukraine Travel Advisory](#) of that same date reported that due to the attacks on major Ukrainian cities, “the Ukrainian government closed its airspace to commercial flights ... [and] ... declared a state of emergency.”

We anticipate that, as conditions continue to deteriorate, Ukrainian students in the United States may experience severe financial impacts as both students and their sponsors have difficulty in accessing their funds in Ukraine.

The most recent [data posted in the SEVIS library](#) (2020) shows that there were 3095 active SEVIS records for students with Ukraine listed as their country of citizenship. As the turmoil and emergent circumstances in Ukraine continue, F-1 students from Ukraine would greatly benefit from the availability of Special Student Relief, which allows DHS to suspend the 20 hour per week limits on incident-to-status on-campus and USCIS-authorized off-campus employment, and for students to be considered engaged in a “full course of study” for the duration of their employment authorization if they satisfy specific minimum course load requirements.

As the situation in Ukraine continues to decline, we ask that you consider and support this request, and to please forward it quickly through the necessary channels within the Department.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent request for Special Student Relief to aid the challenges students from Ukraine are currently facing.

Sincerely,

[Signature Redacted]

Esther D. Brimmer, DPhil
Executive Director & CEO
NAFSA: Association of International Educators

* Regulations allow DHS to suspend or alter rules regarding duration of status, full course of study, and employment eligibility, for specific groups of students from parts of the world that are experiencing emergent circumstances. This collection of benefits is known as "special student relief." [\[63 Fed. Reg. 31872\]](#) (June 10, 1998), amending the Code of Federal Regulations governing F-1 duration of status at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2 (f)(5), full course of study at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2 (f)(6)(A) and (B), and employment eligibility at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2 (f) (9) (i) and (ii)]