HARVARD GRADUATE STUDENTS UNION

HGSU-UAW Local 5118 | a union of student workers at Harvard University

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Harvard UAW Unions Condemn Trump Administration Attacks on Workers, Demand Harvard Provide Further Support

Cambridge, MA – The Harvard Graduate Students Union (HGSU-UAW Local 5118), the Harvard Academic Workers Union (HAW-UAW) Organizing Committee, the Harvard Undergraduate Workers Union (HUWU-UAW), and the Fabrication Workers United (FWU-UAW), condemn in the strongest possible terms the Trump administration's latest attack against Harvard University, its students, and its workers. This attack not only impacts Harvard's international students, but its academic workers on every level. Moreover, it is one of the single largest concentrated deportation threats against a unionized workforce in our nation's history, impacting nearly 4,000 workers.

The Trump Administration's move to revoke Harvard's SEVP certification is unlawful, as demonstrated by the Temporary Restraining Order awarded by a federal judge to Harvard today. This administration has continuously threatened the safety and livelihoods of our non-citizen workers, including undergraduate and graduate students, teaching faculty, and postdoctoral researchers. International students and workers come to this country to pursue ground-breaking research, perform essential teaching labor, and sustain the cultural and academic life of universities. Our international colleagues train future scientists and thinkers, develop critical research tools and methods, and tackle pressing problems across every field—from finding cures for cancer and Alzheimer's, creating wearable robotics to aid mobility, analyzing global crises like climate change, to cultivating critical and creative thought via research in history, philosophy, and the arts. Our workers not only do this work now, but are the next generation of researchers and teachers that will address world problems yet to come.

"I have spent the last four years studying historical mortality in the United States to understand how we can build a healthier, more equal society, and spent countless hours teaching about how we can use statistics to understand the societies we live in. I've made lifelong friends in the process. It's devastating to hear that I could be forced to stop this work before finishing my PhD. But it is unsurprising that the Trump administration wants to stop this type of work and

instead focus on getting his billionaire friends tax cuts," said Sudipta Saha, a 4th year PhD student in Population Health Sciences.

"I have been a non-citizen researcher in the United States for almost 12 years. My research here has not only contributed to our understanding of the brain but also generated potential therapeutics for neurodevelopmental and neurodegenerative diseases. As I've worked in the laboratory day and night, I hold onto the reassurance that my research, and other research like it, would be elevated by accepting many diverse perspectives of non-citizen workers from across the globe. Now, DHS tells us that this is not true.

With these attacks on universities, tax cuts for the rich and silencing free speech against war, genocide and inequality; science, not the commercialized academic commodity, but the method to seek truth, will suffer greatly as the people committed to it are affected. More than half of postdoctoral researchers are non-citizen workers at Harvard; they bring so much to research and teaching. If we are kicked out, universities will never be the same, and indeed neither will the country that houses them," said Ozan Baytaş, a postdoctoral researcher at Harvard Medical School.

There are thousands of international scholars in Harvard's research and teaching workforce. They depend on their jobs to pay rent, buy food, and support children and families. They want what every immigrant to this country wants: the ability to live a dignified life through hard work and dedication. The federal government, in its illegal attempts to stifle First Amendment speech, has put at risk the livelihoods of these workers and the welfare of the entire university community.

"The irreparable harm done to our scientific community is staggering. It is heartbreaking to see the effects on my colleagues and friends, my mentors and students. We feel powerless. Ever since the incarceration of Kseniia Petrova, a brilliant scholar of cutting-edge microscopy, who works just one building away from mine, we have been in a state of permanent fear," said Hannah Grunwald, a postdoctoral researcher at Harvard Medical School, adding, *"My international labmates work tirelessly on projects that range from uncovering treatments for osteoarthritis to understanding whether or not a specific mutation will lead to cancer. The loss of their research will be permanent and hugely damaging to everyone who loves someone who has suffered from disease. My non-citizen colleagues came here because they wanted to be part of our community, wanted to help build American science. They are brilliant scientists, generous colleagues, dear friends. They have homes and families and children who grew up here. Their treatment at the hands of my home government is simply cruel."*

"As an international student worker, I have watched myself and my international friends work intensely long hours researching and giving back to the academic community at Harvard. It is

heartbreaking that all our efforts may have been futile and we may end this school year going home for good. This school is the only place many of us can afford to attend outside of our home countries due to its generous international financial aid policy, making this declaration even worse as many of us would have to go back home, far away from the communities we have found here in the United States, leaving us isolated," added an anonymous undergraduate worker part of HUWU. Harvard is one of the few schools across the nation that offers the same financial aid policy for domestic and international undergraduate students.

This attack is just one front in the broader assault on worker rights and higher education across the country.

"The Trump's administration's threat to international scholars is a huge attack on thousands of UAW represented workers on Harvard's campus. We are seeing escalations against immigrant workers across the country and this is no different," said UAW Region 9A Director Brandon Mancilla. *"The labor movement must see these attacks as what they are - an attempt to divide workers and create false enemies in a time of rampant corporate greed."*

"This attack on Harvard is a test case for higher education more generally. If the administration can succeed here, they will come after students at other colleges and universities. We must fight back at Harvard and everywhere else. Higher ed labor, from staff and faculty to student workers and researchers across the country, stand with international students everywhere," said Evan Bowman, Higher Education Labor United (HELU) Vice Chair, IT Chair at AFSCME 328 at Oregon Health & Science University

Our unions will fight for our members' ability to teach, study, and research safely in this country and this institution. We commend Harvard University for already seeking judicial intervention to halt the most immediate impacts of this policy change, and ask that the University leadership continue to support international workers through the following steps:

- **Exercise all legal rights to protect student records, enrollment status, disciplinary records, employment records, or personal information of any Harvard affiliates** from immigration authorities or other federal agencies. Refuse to comply with or institute surveillance practices of Harvard affiliates, including those participating in political speech and protests on campus.
- **Commit to maintaining all student's enrollment or worker status if their SEVIS or Visa status changes;** in the event of SEVIS or Visa terminations, **commit to reinstating** those statuses as quickly as possible.
- **Create consistent remote schooling and work options** for students and workers that may need to complete their schooling or appointments outside of the United States.

- **Issue immediate notifications** to all students, faculty, and staff if Harvard University representatives receive a request from immigration officials to access records or campus buildings.
- **Create an emergency fund and provide comprehensive pro bono legal services** that are accessible for all non-citizen Harvard affiliates
- **Commit to securing workers' visa status** where possible to visas that do not go through SEVP.
- **Commit to helping any institution of higher education accept the co-enrollment and transfer of our international student workers** and to defray the costs of such actions, including a commitment to help maintain all levels of scholarship, financial aid, and other financial support currently available to our affected students.
- **Clarify the University's definition of non-public spaces** (e.g., through a map accessible to affiliates), where non-citizen affiliates can be safe from warrantless ICE presence.
- **Affirm that no Harvard affiliates, including non-citizens, will be punished for the content of their speech,** particularly on the basis of political dissent and solidarity with Palestine.

We echo our faculty in the AAUP who write: "The Trump administration is unlawfully seeking to destroy higher education in the United States. It now demands that we sacrifice our international students in the process. Universities cannot acquiesce to such extortion."

Finally, we add—no matter what, HGSU, HUWU, HAW, and FWU will be here to defend our workers, our labor, and our institutions of higher education today, tomorrow, and whenever they are under attack.

About Our Unions

The Harvard Graduate Students Union - United Auto Workers (HGSU-UAW) represents over 5,500 student workers across Harvard University's 13 schools, fighting for fair working conditions, equity, and respect for all.

The Harvard Academic Workers Union - United Auto Workers (HAW-UAW) represents around 3,000 non-tenure track academic workers in teaching and research at Harvard, including postdoctoral fellows, lecturers, preceptors, and staff scientists.

The Harvard Undergraduate Workers Union - United Auto Workers (HUWU-UAW) represents 500 undergraduate and graduate student workers across campus libraries, cafés, and EDI offices.

The Fabrication Workers United - United Auto Workers (FWU-UAW) represents approximately 90 student workers in the Fabrication Lab of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, fighting for equity, respect and good working conditions in design.

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