

EXH. 14
DECL. OF MEERA KOMARRAJU
(SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CARBONDALE)

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS**

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,
et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY, et al.,

Defendants.

Civil Action No.

DECLARATION OF MEERA KOMARRAJU,
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CARBONDALE

DECLARATION OF MEERA KOMARRAJU

I, Meera Komarraju, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, hereby declare and affirm,

1. I am the Provost & Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs at Southern Illinois University located in Carbondale, IL. My educational background includes a Ph.D. I have been employed as the Provost & Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs since December 2019 and as Interim Provost & Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs from April 2018 to December 2019.

2. I submit this declaration in support of Illinois's litigation challenging the policies announced on July 6, 2020 by "Broadcast Message" and to be published as a Temporary Final Rule to amend requirements of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (the "Rule").

3. I have compiled the information set forth below through personal knowledge and Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIU) personnel who have assisted me in gathering this information from our institution. I have also familiarized myself with the Rule in order to understand its immediate impact on SIU.

[Background on College/University/System and International Student Population]

4. Chartered in 1869, Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIU) is classified by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education as a High Research Activity Doctoral University. SIU boasts ABET accredited engineering programs, AACSB accredited business programs and is one of only 105 universities in the United States to have both a School of Law and a School of Medicine. Total enrollment is 11,695 with 9,377 full-time students. Institute of International Education (IIE) ranks SIU's international student enrollment among the top 150th U.S. colleges and universities, with nearly 2000 international students and scholars in 2018.

5. As an institution within the Southern Illinois University System, SIUC is governed by the SIU Board of Trustees (BOT), which sets policies and rules for the system. The

SIU President is the chief executive charged with the responsibility for administration of the system. The Chancellor is accountable and reports to the President and the BOT on the operation and administration of SIUC.

6. Adding newly admitted international students to current students yields a potential international enrollment of 847 mostly degree-seeking students in the fall 2020 semester. SIU employs approximately 750 academic staff offering more than 200 undergraduate, 70 master's and 31 doctoral programs within eight colleges. SIU is a primary economic engine for Southern Illinois and its sixteen counties that lie within the Delta region. SIU's international students support over 650 jobs within the its Congressional District and contribute over \$46 million annually to the economy of the District.

7. Southern Illinois University currently has over 800 enrolled students (Spring 2020) who have F-1 visas. These enrolled students come from 100 countries and contribute over \$16,000,000 in tuition and fees to SIU annually.

8. Of these over 800 enrolled students with F-1 visas, more than 600 are currently in the United States.

9. SIU has 156 newly admitted students for enrollment in fall 2020 who will require F-1 or M-1 status. Only a few of these students are currently in the United States, whereas most are currently living outside the United States and require a visa to enter the country for study. These students are expected to contribute \$2.76 million to SIU in the 2020-21 school year.

10. The policies announced on July 6, 2020 by "Broadcast Message" to amend requirements of SEVP (the "Rule") place unique and undue hardship upon SIU and SIU's international student body. Increased costs associated with potential deportation or high cost international charter flights and subsequent quarantining abroad form a substantial financial

hurdle for many students. International students recruited by SIU at the undergraduate level are often enrolled in specific international double degree programs that are coordinated with education ministries and institutions of other nations. These types of education agreements have a prescribed pathway for students to obtain degrees. In short, students can only obtain degrees by completing the first portion of their studies at the originating institution, and the last portion at SIU, and cannot transfer to a third-party institution with the realistic expectation of making normal progress toward their degree.

[Economic Harm to College/University/System]

11. We estimate that 25% of our current student already within the United States (n=156) may dis-enroll for fall 2020 if they lose their F-1 visa and lose ability to obtain a Curricular Practical Training (CPT)/Occupational Practical Training (OPT)work visas, representing an approximately \$3-million-dollar loss in revenue to the university. Students transferring to another US university that has greater capacity for in-person instruction could total 10% of all expected fall students (n=85), leading to a \$1.5 million decrease in tuition and fees collected. SIU currently hosts students who have been unable to return home since the outbreak of the pandemic. Students who cannot safely relocate to their home country to study remotely, if SIU transitions to completely online course delivery under a worsening pandemic, could represent at least 80% of all international students, leading to more than \$12 million in financial losses to the University.

12. The policies announced on July 6, 2020 by “Broadcast Message” have the potential to create mass disenrollment of international students, leading to a maximum disenrollment of 847 students.

13. Disenrollment of the majority of international students under a worst-case scenario could lead to a direct reduction in an amount over \$18,000,000 in lost revenue.

14. This situation is particularly acute when you consider that many international students enrolled at SIU pay an international tuition rate that is 2.5 times the domestic rate, thus drastically and simultaneously reducing revenues and financial aid resources for other students.

15. Demand for housing will substantially drop both on or near campus as a result of the new policies for fall 2020.

16. Reductions of students living on campus but remaining enrolled would negatively affect revenue for SIU in addition to loss of tuition – e.g., housing revenue. On-campus housing is in high demand by F-1 graduate students, including those with families.

17. Reduced enrollment could also increase health insurance costs for the reduced number of students remaining on campus, both international and domestic.

18. Operational costs for SIU could increase if the institution opens up more fully than currently planned in response to the Rule. Increase in instructional costs could rise if multiple modalities of delivery were required.

[Administrative Burdens and Planning Disruptions]

19. SEVP forms regarding operational changes due to COVID were submitted in the required time frame by the SIU Center for International Education. In March 2020, classes transitioned to online or remote delivery. As of July 10, 2020 SEVP, forms regarding operation changes for the three SIU campuses during the fall 2020 semester were completed and submitted.

20. SIU is planning for a multiple format course delivery model, including face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses for Fall 2020, with size limitations on face-to-face classes to accommodate social distancing, and no change in start date.

21. The overarching goal for fall courses is to implement instructional strategies that meet student and curricular needs while protecting the health and safety of the campus community to the greatest extent possible. To achieve that goal, SIU will be offering courses in several formats: traditional face-to-face courses; hybrid courses in which some instruction is face-to-face but parts of the course may be provided online or in alternative formats; and courses fully online or in another alternative format. After Thanksgiving break, the last week of instruction and final exams will be completed remotely out of an abundance of caution to protect public health. Exceptions may be made for programs in which face-to-face instruction is essential.

22. Each academic program will finalize an instructional plan, including the format for each course, by August 1 in order to allow students to know what to expect and/or to change schedules to ensure that international students have at least one course that meets in person. Additional information about the process has been provided to deans, directors and chairs who will engage individual faculty regarding their courses.

23. New individualized I-20 certifications will be processed by the SIU Center for International Education (undergraduate level) and the Graduate School (graduate level). Resources to perform this additional task will redirect immigration and admissions staff away from other duties for the next 2.5 months.

24. SIU is in the fortunate position to have already announced (and to have already been planning for) a mixed/hybrid approach to fall instructional delivery. Despite the move to

remote teaching in the spring of 2020, technology challenges remain, in terms of instructional delivery, curricular development, and remote work arrangements for staff as required for reduced office occupancy. Re-issuing I-20s for each student will require detailed planning on the part of both students and their academic units. The development of online and hybrid learning courses that will be necessary to serve international students is being aided by the SIU Center for Teaching Excellence. Yet challenges for compliance with the new Rule is most problematic if SIU changes to an entirely remote teaching model mid-semester, in case the pandemic situation worsens and the state or nation declares a stay at home, or similar, order.

25. With only a few weeks before the start of the semester, a great amount of uncertainty has been caused by the Rule – in areas such as housing and employment needs for international students, leading to other concerns such as food insecurity and their physical and mental well-being.

26. Requirements to report operational changes due to COVID-19 within 10 days has not posed a significant challenge to date. However, additional burdens from the Rule that were not present before the March 2020 changes due to COVID, such as admission deferments and reissuance of I-20s will undoubtedly strain the staffing levels of both the Center for International Education and the Graduate School.

27. The timely implementation of special projects critical to the overall operation of the university in regards to recruitment and retention of students may experience critical delays due to certification and compliance demands on international student-serving staff members because of the Rule.

[Harmful Impact on Educational Mission]

28. Denial of visas will have a profound effect on SIU's research programs including those funded through federal resources, especially given the fact that close to 25% of all graduate students enrolled at SIU are international students.

29. In the event that the Rule increases visa denials and/or deportations, professor-student communications and collaboration will negatively impact students' progress toward graduation as well as negatively impact the research productivity of faculty. The loss of campus internationalization, and the decrease in cross-cultural learning opportunities for domestic students will jeopardize the unique mission of the University to embrace inclusive excellence and create and exchange knowledge to shape future leaders, improve our communities, and transform lives.

[Impact on Health of Students, University Community, and Public Health]

30. The health effects of the Rule on students who are denied visas or who are unable to travel are potentially profound. SIU is host to students who were scheduled to leave upon graduation or at the end of the spring semester and who are still unable to travel. Morocco and Saudi Arabia are two countries of origin where students have been unable to return home. Morocco had closed their border and prioritized evacuation flights for Fulbright students. Saudi Arabia has prioritized evacuation flights from high infection locations, leaving Carbondale students stranded.

31. Currently, many states are experiencing unprecedented levels of infections and hospitalizations. Under these circumstances, it causes an undue and inappropriate burden to require institutions of higher learning to choose between public health decisions and the threat of deportation of their international students.

32. If faculty and staff, many of whom are in at-risk groups, fall ill, the virus may be able to squash the primary economic engine in the region, further jeopardizing the region's reopening and recovery.

[Economic Harm to Students and the States]

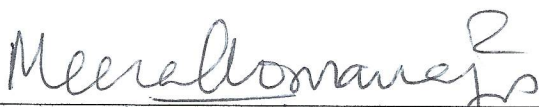
33. Student experiential learning opportunities such as CPT and OPT allow students to gain practical training after completing their SIU degree and is vital to the recruiting efforts of SIU and its peer institutions in Illinois.

34. While the STEM OPT students are known for representing an important talent pool for the high-tech sectors, even non-profit institutions and Illinois state agencies embrace the mutual benefits of employing SIU's CPT and OPT students.

35. International students contribute \$41 billion annually to the U.S. economy, and the impact international students have on the local and regional economies is substantial, particularly in the sectors of higher education, housing, dining, retail, transportation, telecommunications, and health care.

I declare under penalty of perjury that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed this 11th day of July, 2020


[NAME] Meera Komarraju
[Title] Provost & Vice Chancellor of
[Institution] Academic Affairs
Southern Illinois University Carbondale