



Association of Pathology Chairs

Promoting Excellence In Academic Pathology

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Ms. Sharon Hageman
Acting Regulatory Unit Chief, Office of Policy and Planning
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Department of Homeland Security
500 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20536

Submitted via Federal eRulemaking Portal

RE: DHS Docket No. ICEB-2019-0006 - Proposed Rule Establishing a Fixed Time Period of Admission and an Extension of Stay Procedure for Nonimmigrant Academic Students, Exchange Visitors, and Representatives of Foreign Information Media

Dear Ms. Hageman:

The Association of Pathology Chairs (APC) represents the academic department chairs, program directors and medical educators responsible for training medical students, residents and fellows in pathology at accredited medical schools and teaching hospitals throughout the United States.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is proposing to eliminate “duration of status” as an authorized period of stay for certain classes of non-immigrant visas, including J-1 visas. If implemented, this policy would set a finite expiration date for the length of an authorized stay for affected non-immigrant visas. Under this policy, F, J and I non-immigrants would be admitted to the U.S. for a specific period of stay, and they would be required to apply for an extension of stay should they need more time to complete their program, employment, or assignment. **Due to the uncertainty of outcomes to applications for extension, APC anticipates crippling disruptions to resident and fellow training in pathology, with devastating impact on the pipeline of pathologists in the U.S. Therefore, APC strongly opposes this proposal and urges the agency not to move forward with implementation.**

Training in anatomic pathology or clinical pathology requires a minimum 4-year residency to complete. Once completed, an estimated 90% of residents continue their training in at least one 1- or 2-year subspecialty fellowship to hone their skills to one or more subspecialty areas of practice. Uniquely, pathologists typically practice in more than one subspecialty; thus, to be qualified for many positions, a pathologist needs to be subspecialty trained in more than one area.

The impact of the proposed changes would be to force foreign pathology trainees to complete residency and, upon expiration of their visas, leave the U.S., since they would not yet be competitive for employment as a pathologist in the U.S.

Pathology, as a specialty, will be especially adversely impacted by the proposed changes, since upwards of 40% of our residents are international medical graduates – more than any other medical specialty. Importantly, once trained, the majority of these residents would typically go on to practice pathology in the U.S. However, as stated above, they would no longer be competitive for positions in the U.S. Therefore, they would train and leave the country; thus denying U.S. health systems and patients of the immense benefits of the academic investment in these trainees.

As you may know, academic pathology, in particular, has been at the forefront of diagnostic testing and early understanding of the pathogenesis of COVID-19, and has contributed substantially to the body of knowledge on diagnostics and therapeutics to control fatalities and the spread of this deadly disease. Losing a significant proportion of the next generation of practicing pathologists would have a lasting, profoundly negative effect on the future of health care in the U.S.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this proposed rule. For additional information, please contact APC's Executive Director, Priscilla Markwood, at pmarkwood@apcprods.org or 302-660-4945.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lydia Pleotis Howell", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lydia Pleotis Howell, MD
President, Association of Pathology Chairs