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September 24, 2012

Dear STEM Visa Supporters:

As you know, last week a STEM visa bill that included an unfortunate poison pill was scheduled for a vote on the House floor and failed, as anticipated, under suspension of the rules. If it had been a clean bill to create a new path for STEM graduates to acquire timely access to green cards, it would have been non-controversial (as suspension bills should be) and would have passed by a super majority on a bipartisan basis. Unfortunately, such a bill is not the bill that the Majority chose to bring to the floor.

Despite this disappointment, I believe the STEM fields witnessed a significant victory last week in Congress on this issue. For the first time, Democrats were united in their support for a new visa program for up to 50,000 STEM graduates, due in large part to the leadership of my colleague, Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, and the work of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

One thing I said during our debate on the floor is that there is no debate about the need for STEM visas. This would not have been a forgone conclusion even a year ago. This represents real progress, and I believe opens up a timely and significant opportunity to get something done for STEM grads this year.

I trust you understand why so many Democrats were compelled to vote against Chairman Lamar Smith's bill. When we have dire backlogs in employment- and family-based visas, a national policy that incentivizes illegal immigration and a broken system that is desperate for broader legal avenues, not narrower ones, we could not with good conscience eliminate the Diversity Visa (DV) program. This is often the only avenue that individuals from nations with low levels of immigration have to come legally to the United States. The fact that we welcome and embrace the contributions of STEM graduates to the U.S. should not require that we ignore the long queues throughout the system and slam the door in the face of others who also have much to contribute to the U.S.

While we could not eliminate the DV program, I stand ready to work with you to identify how, *this year*, we can come up with a bipartisan solution to staple a green card to each advanced degree in science, technology, engineering and math earned by an aspiring immigrant at our U.S. universities. I would like to meet with you and other colleagues invested in moving this issue forward when Congress returns to Washington, D.C. in November. If you are interested in joining me, or for questions about last week's vote or my position on this important issue, please contact Susan Collins with my office at susan.collins@mail.house.gov or 202-225-8203.

I look forward to working with you more closely in the near future to help the United States attract—and keep—the best and the brightest immigrants from around the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luis V. Gutierrez", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Luis V. Gutierrez
Member of Congress