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Advocacy Corner

by Mackenzie Kerby

As we settle into one year since the pandemic rocked our academic worlds, many of us have become used to the mixed emotions that come with planning for the future. Whether you are weary, worried, burdened, optimistic, hopeful, excited or a combination of all and more, there are still many things to consider as we plan our summer and fall terms. With all of this taking up major mental real estate, advocacy can easily slip our minds. After all, with a new Presidential administration and vaccination rates increasing, things can only go up from here, right?

While this may be true, it remains just as important now more than ever to hold fast to consistent advocacy and to raise our voices in unison to fight for our students, our teachers, our staff and our institutions. Here are a few topics of consideration that we urge you to discuss with your congress people:

1. Safe Reopening of Consulates and Embassies: Many consulates and embassies around the world are still operating in emergency mode and taking appointments for emergencies only. While the Department of State has mentioned that student visas can qualify for an emergency appointment, it is widely known that many students are unable to secure these appointments. Safely reopening the consulates and embassies in countries will help to ease the burden off the students and assure new students are able to enter the United States to pursue their English language studies. To check

the visa appointment wait times that affect your students, see [here](#).

2. Duration of Status: While we have not heard anything new regarding the potential change to duration of status, it is still important to address this issue with your senators and representatives. Duration of status is a vital pillar to the international education world that allows for flexibility in student study plans. EnglishUSA has a template letter [here](#) that can easily be adapted for your conversations.

3. Value of International Students: Sharing with your congress people the value that your international students bring to your state and district is always vitally important. Whether it's sharing student stories, stories about mutual cultural transformation, or numbers about the economic impact, these make a difference in how your congress people view our sector of the international education sphere. Urging your representative or senator to make a public statement or tweet in support of international students and education can go a long way in changing the conversation.

As always, we at EnglishUSA appreciate your support of your students and programs and the advocacy work that you do on behalf of them. We want to hear from you about your experiences. Please share with us in EnglishUSA's [Engage](#) forum.

Mackenzie Kerby is the Director of Global higher Education Recruitment for ELS Language Centers. Prior to this, she taught English at all levels: IEPs, high school, and university. She has presented at EnglishUSA PDC, TESOL, and is published in The Year's Work in English. Ms. Kerby's interest lies in advocacy for international education.