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Advocacy Corner - v2

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ADVOCACY CORNER

by Mackenzie Kerby

At the risk of stating the obvious, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed our industry for the foreseeable future. Students are studying online, if they can study at all. University-governed programs and private language schools alike have had to undergo massive furloughs and layoffs just to stay afloat and hopefully return stronger in the future. We all know this and it's these challenges that make it seem as if advocacy is useless and not worth our time. After all, our lives have suffered massive changes and many of us hardly have time to do the basics. It is for that reason, though, that we must continue in our advocacy efforts and do so in ways that are more direct and consistent.

To that end, below is a summary of the "asks" that EnglishUSA has put together alongside NAFSA so that we can, as a group, reach out to our elected officials in one unified voice. You can find more details on the points below [here](#).

1. Urge Congress to consider English language programs in its future acts for financial resources, oversight and policy changes.
2. Direct the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs to institute transparent, easy-to-understand processes and timely processing for visa renewals.
3. Require the U.S. State Department to report to Congress and the public its plans to process the expected surge of visa requests.
4. Require the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to postpone any non-COVID-19 rulemaking that impacts international students, exchange visitors, faculty, and staff for the duration of the pandemic.
5. Direct DHS' U.S. Customs and Border Protection to implement a nimble process at ports of entry.
6. Establish a national recruitment strategy to attract and retain international students and scholars.

With the points and resources above at your helm, getting started with advocacy work can be quick and easy. Three options follow for how *you* can make *your* voice heard with respect to the amount of time you have available.

10 Minutes

To get started, simply search for your [U.S. Representative's](#) and [U.S. Senators' contact information](#). Then either utilize the EnglishUSA templated [letter](#) to send your Congress person an email *or* draft your own. Don't be afraid to use your own personal story. Have you been laid off? Has your organization's student population dropped drastically? Have other English language programs in the area had to close indefinitely? These types of stories are imperative to having an impactful communication with your Congress person.

5 Minutes

We can't visit our Congress people in person for the time being and these in person visits can be extremely effective. In place of that, try calling your Congress person. Be aware that you will likely only speak to a staffer and they won't stay on the phone long. However, having a literal

voice that is followed up by an email can be a great way to build a connection with your Congress person's office.

3 Minutes

If this still all seems too daunting and if you only have a couple of quick minutes, head over to <https://connectingourworld.org/>. There, you can click "Take Action" and simply input your own information and NAFSA will send the communication on your behalf.

Regardless of the amount of time you have available, we implore you to take action. Your voice and your story matters and without sharing them, English language programs across the country might not be considered in relief efforts, policy making, and future planning. When you do reach out to your Congress person, let us know in the [EnglishUSA Engage communities](#) or on the [EnglishUSA Facebook group](#)!

Mackenzie Kerby is the Acting Regional Director 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.