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The Hon. Marco Mendicino
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

*Cc: Olga Radchenko, Director of Policy to Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship,
David Cashaback, Senior Director, Horizontal Policy and Programs, Settlement and Integration.*

October 30, 2020

Dear Minister Marco Mendicino,

Making Post Graduate Work Permits Renewable in Response to COVID-19 Job Loss

My name is Sarom Rho and I am the National Coordinator of Migrant Students United, an organization of current and former international students in nine provinces, and the only national representative body of migrant students in Canada. **I am writing about the deepening crisis that former international students are currently facing, and the urgent need to make post-graduate work permits renewable and allow all NOC employment to be counted towards permanent residency.**

As you know, international students receive time-restricted post graduate work permits (PGWPs) during which they are required to complete 12-24 months of high-waged and high-skilled work to qualify for permanent residency (PR). With COVID-19 related job losses worsening again in the second wave, most graduates do not have access to jobs, particularly the NOC 0, A and B jobs required for PR. Despite living here for years, building relationships and communities, thousands of migrants face deportation if work permits are not renewed. These are potential immigrants who have lived and studied here, and perform skilled, and essential work in Canada. They are being punished for a crisis not of their making.

According to recent IRCC data, over 17,000 one and two-year work permits were issued between September 2019 and June 2020. Many will certainly not be able to complete the work required for PR. Others who previously received three-year permits but only recently acquired NOC 0, A or B positions and have not been able to complete 12-24 months before COVID-19 are also in crisis.

Our team at Migrant Students United has held over a dozen online and in-person meetings since mid-March, where we have directly connected with over 500 former students. As a result, we launched two petitions, calling for renewal of work permits and support for international students during COVID-19. Over 15,000 people have signed on, see [here](#) and [here](#).

We have been speaking out in the media, please see for example this [CBC story from September](#), and this [Global News interview from an action this past Sunday October 25](#) in Toronto.

Many are in crisis, including people like [Michelle, a mother from Jamaica with an expired permit](#): “I came here in 2018 looking for a better life. When I got my permit in October, I said, “Yes, this is it,” until COVID came in. That basically wiped everything away because everything closed down: nothing is happening and nobody is calling you. You feel drained because you see the time going. I only got a one year post graduate work permit, and I could see the time going every month, and [my PGWP] finally ended last week. So I’m barely holding onto hope right now, because I’ve spent everything coming here.”

[Shiva, a migrant student worker from Iran whose permit expired two weeks ago](#), also shared her story with us: “I spent three years of my life to come to Canada. I had a lot of dreams. I had a lot of plans. So now because of this pandemic, everything has changed. In a normal situation, finding a job is too hard and in the pandemic, the situation is worse. I was eager to get a full-time job and apply for PR. Now PR scores are too high and it’s impossible to apply for it without having Canadian experience and a full time job. The situation is terrible and very stressful.”

[Leo, an international student from Brazil with an expired PGWP, summarized](#): “It does not matter how hard I study or work to improve my score. The system keeps pushing me down. We come here on temporary permits, and are kept temporary. We have to meet impossible standards.”

Because of the important recent public policy change implemented by you, migrants are able [restore their status until December 31st of this year](#). **You’ve already taken the first step, and I urge you to make PGWPs renewable to allow post-graduates to avail of this opportunity before December 31st.**

In addition, please take swift action to:

1. Ensure real access to PR: Lower points requirements for PR (CRS); Count work that is part-time, in-school, and in any occupation towards PR; and ensure full and permanent immigration status for all migrants;
2. Fix rules around work: Remove time-limits and industry restrictions on work;
3. Unite families: Allow families to travel; ensure work permits for family members.
4. Lower tuition and ensure full services: Work with provincial partners to ensure migrant students pay domestic tuition; and have full access to all services including healthcare, housing, jobs, scholarships, pandemic emergency benefits, and in-school support; ensure immediate access to Social Insurance Numbers.

I look forward to speaking with you soon on this urgent matter. I can be reached at sarom@migrantworkersalliance.org and 647-858-2854.

Thank you.



Sarom Rho

National Coordinator, Migrant Students United