



**Statement of AAI Committee on Public Affairs Chair Ross M. Kiedl, Ph.D.
June 9, 2020**

**AAI Opposes U.S. Withdrawal from WHO and
Visa Changes Affecting Some Chinese Scientists/Students**

The American Association of Immunologists (AAI) strongly opposes two recent actions by President Donald Trump that will impede scientific advancement and harm public health: the withdrawal of the United States from the World Health Organization (WHO), and the May 29, 2020, "[Proclamation](#)" disallowing visas for certain Chinese students and researchers.

As the nation's largest professional association of research scientists and physicians who study the immune system, AAI represents many scientists who are on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19. Whether researching immune system reaction to the virus (SARS-CoV-2) or developing treatments or vaccines, these scientists depend on transparent communication and robust collaboration with colleagues from around the world.

- Withdrawing the U.S. from the WHO, particularly in the midst of an international pandemic, is wholly counterproductive and undermines WHO's purpose, influence, and abilities. As the "directing and coordinating authority on international health within the United Nations system," the WHO, which the U.S. co-founded and has supported since 1948, prevents, detects, and responds to health emergencies around the globe. While the time will come to explore whether the WHO did all it could, as best it could, in the months leading up to the pandemic, it is wrong and dangerous for the U.S. to withdraw its support at a time when the international scientific and public health communities urgently need closer collaboration.
- While sharing concerns about threats posed by foreign countries to U.S. national security and intellectual property, AAI opposes the President's Proclamation, which constitutes an overly broad attack on our scientific colleagues from China. Pursuant to this Proclamation, many Chinese students and researchers who contribute importantly to the U.S. scientific enterprise may be denied entry into, or required to leave, the U.S. for specious reasons over which they have no control. Further, the Proclamation undermines efforts by many federal science agencies, higher education institutions, scientific associations, and businesses to ensure that the U.S. remains an open, welcoming nation that will attract the most talented scientists and students from around the world. Although AAI supports efforts to address threats to U.S. research or innovation, we oppose any legislation or policy which could unfairly impact innocent Chinese students or scientists. Instead, we encourage American universities and institutions to continue working with appropriate federal authorities to identify and stop those who engage in illegal activity that jeopardizes national security or damages the U.S. scientific enterprise.

Taken together, the President's actions will seriously harm the ability of U.S. and international scientists and public health leaders to work collaboratively to combat this pandemic and advance other important scientific research. Now more than ever, we need to work with our international colleagues – both here at home and abroad – to better understand and vanquish this deadly viral enemy and the many other public health threats that will undoubtedly emerge.