April 8, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro N. Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

By email

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

The Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration and NAFSA: Association of International Educators respectfully request that in addition to designating Nigerian nationals for Temporary Protected Status, you provide Special Student Relief to F–1 students from Nigeria experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the political and economic crises in Nigeria.

The Department of Homeland Security can provide relief to Nigerians studying in the United States. Temporary Protected Status is warranted where return of nationals to a country “would pose a serious threat to their personal safety”, because of “ongoing armed conflict” or “extraordinary and temporary conditions.”¹ Special Student Relief suspends certain regulatory requirements related to duration of status, course load, and off-campus employment authorization for students facing severe economic hardship as a result of emergent circumstances in their home countries.² Emergent circumstances can include: “natural disasters, wars and military conflicts, [and] national or international financial crises.”³ Severe economic hardship can result from, among other things, “substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate . . . [and] unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student’s source of support.”⁴

Nigeria faces twin political and economic crises. The Nigerian government is engaged in armed conflict with terrorist groups including Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West African Province, a separatist movement in the southeast, and various militias throughout.⁵ Widespread armed conflict has internally displaced over 3 million Nigerians and produced over 3,000,000 Nigerian refugees.⁶ Economically, Nigeria is experiencing record-high inflation and a rapidly

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¹ 8 U.S.C §§ 1254a(b)(1)(A), (C).
² See 8 C.F.R. §§ 214.2(f)(5)(v), (6)(i)(F), (9)(i), and (9)(ii)(C)-(D).
³ Special Student Relief, https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/travel/special-student-relief (last visited Apr. 8, 2024).
depreciating currency.7 Nigerians must now contend with approximately 30% inflation and a currency, the naira, which has lost 230% of its value relative to the U.S. dollar in the past year.8

The ongoing armed conflict and its economic and humanitarian consequences create temporary and extraordinary conditions that make returning a risk to the personal safety of Nigerians in the United States.9 The political and economic instability in Nigeria also adversely affects Nigerian F–1 students’ ability to cover their basic living expenses and their families’ ability to support them from Nigeria. Temporary Protected Status for Nigerian nationals and Special Student Relief is merited for these students to ensure they can support themselves through this turmoil and not face the prospect of return to harm.

Sincerely,

Jill Welch
Senior Policy Advisor
Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration

Jill Allen Murray
Deputy Executive Director for Public Policy
NAFSA: Association of International Educators

cc: James D. Hicks, Acting Director, Student Exchange and Visitor Program, Immigration and Customs Enforcement

8 Id.