We're facing a critical threat to American innovation.

With visa appointments suspended and thousands of students' statuses already revoked and lives upended, we're witnessing a self-inflicted wound to American competitiveness. As the Executive Director of the American Statistical Association, I view this policy shift with serious concern.

Statistics drives innovation across every sector of the economy, particularly in healthcare, AI, and high tech. When we block exceptional talent from outside the U.S., we don't protect American interests - we undermine them. In the field of statistics, where breakthroughs in AI and medical research depend on culturally diverse perspectives, restricting this pipeline is counterproductive.

International students comprise a significant portion of statistics programs, earning 60% of master's degrees and 70% of doctoral degrees awarded in statistics in recent years (NCSES). Overall, 56% of international students are pursuing STEM fields, with 25% working on degrees in mathematics, statistics, and computer science (Open Doors Report).

Graduate statistics programs rarely see domestic and international students

competing for the same spots. These spots would often go unfilled without international talent. At the undergraduate level, international students don't crowd out U.S. students – the higher tuition they pay enables universities to expand offerings (National Foundation for American Policy). Further, their global perspectives strengthen classrooms and research.

As the Economist notes "Though America has more foreign students than any other country, it would seem to have room for more: they make up only about 6% of those in higher education, compared with over 25% in each of its main competitors—Britain, Australia and Canada."

International students contributed \$43.8 billion to the U.S. economy in 2023-2024,

supporting over 378,000 American jobs. Every three international students create or sustain one U.S. job across the broader economy (NAFSA: Association of International Educators). In STEM fields like statistics, this economic multiplier effect is particularly significant given these students' higher likelihood of remaining in the U.S. workforce postgraduation.

Increasingly, our world relies on data and statistical thinking to drive discovery and inform decisions. While there is certainly a need to bolster homegrown talent, doing so will require time and significant investment. So, let's invest, but let's also bring in the best in the world to the U.S. Why risk the future of data-driven progress? Why reduce our

nation's competitiveness? America's strength in statistics comes from attracting global, diverse talent, not from isolating ourselves from it.

Personal note: My life has been enriched by colleagues from around the world. As a cancer survivor, I'm alive today in part because of research and care from people born abroad. We must ensure this expertise remains available for future generations.