



Stable STEM Workforce Critical to Future Advancements

A stable science and technology workforce is a top priority for the National Photonics Initiative (NPI). The current supply of workers in the optics and photonics industry is not meeting current demand and is not sufficient to sustain future growth. This is true at every level, from PhD physicists to engineers to skilled technicians. The NPI urges lawmakers to support science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education (STEM) investments that will help ensure a more stable workforce and foster innovation in these critical scientific fields. Additionally, the NPI supports innovative solutions to help retain talent in the U.S.

The **Keep STEM Talent Act**, which was sponsored by Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Representative Bill Foster (D-IL) in the previous Congress, presents another potential solution to the challenge of establishing and maintaining a stable workforce. The **Keep STEM Talent Act** aims to grow the U.S. economy by retaining talented international graduates who have earned STEM advanced degrees from American universities by exempting these graduates from restrictive green card limitations that significantly delay or prevent their pathway to citizenship. Under the **Keep STEM Talent Act**, a STEM advanced degree graduate could obtain lawful permanent residence if:

- The STEM graduate secures an offer of employment from, or is employed by, a U.S. employer in a field related to their degree at a rate of pay above the median wage level for the position in the geographic area of employment; and
- Their employer receives an approved labor certification for the position, which requires the Secretary of Labor to determine and certify that no qualified U.S. workers are available for the position and that the wages and working conditions of U.S. workers are not adversely affected by the hiring of the foreign worker.

Should this legislation be reintroduced in this Congress, we urge lawmakers to support it and continue supporting investments in STEM education to help develop a stable and sustainable STEM workforce for the future.

About the National Photonics Initiative

The National Photonics Initiative (NPI) is a collaborative alliance among industry, academia and government to raise awareness of photonics and the impact of photonics on our everyday lives.