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April 12, 2013

The Honorable Robert Goodlatte
United States House of Representatives
2309 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Goodlatte:

On behalf of the Northern Virginia Technology Council (NVTC) and our approximately 1,000 member companies and their 200,000 employees in the region, we are writing to offer our support for the **Immigration Innovation Act** or **I-Squared Act of 2013 (S. 169)**.

The I-Squared Act addresses the immediate need of the technology business community to fill the shortage of qualified workers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields by expanding the number of H1-B visas. The legislation also takes direct employer investments from these new targeted immigration benefits to fund targeted initiatives that strengthen the U.S. STEM pipeline by recruiting and training more STEM teachers, improving access to computer science, and helping colleges produce more degree programs in the STEM fields. This new bill complements Sen. Mark Warner's efforts to provide green cards to foreign-born, U.S.-educated students and entrepreneurs through The Startup Act 3.0, which NVTC endorsed earlier this year.

This legislation will help drive job growth and innovation by taking steps to help companies recruit and retain global talent, encourage more research and development (R&D) and generate new intellectual property and new technology. NVTC believes that the reforms in the legislation will support entrepreneurship and job growth in Virginia and the rest of the country.

In a global economy, the United States must do more to realize the benefits of our competitive advantage in higher education. The I-Squared Act proposes to replace the hard cap with an "H-1B escalator" that automatically adjusts the number of available visas depending on demand, thereby allowing more foreign nationals who receive an advanced degree in a STEM field from a university in the United States to stay in our country to innovate, rather than be forced to leave upon graduation.

In addition, the unemployment rate in STEM industries is significantly lower in the Commonwealth compared to those industries that don't have a STEM focus. By funding more teacher training initiatives, the U.S. can provide students with a challenging environment that encourages their passion for the STEM fields, thereby improving their employment outlook. The I-Squared legislation utilizes funds from the increased number of STEM visas and green cards to pay for this training.

The Northern Virginia Technology Council is pleased to offer its support for the Immigration Innovation Act as the House Judiciary Committee considers the bill. NVTC believes this legislation will help establish a 21st century immigration system that serves the nation's economic interests and upholds our responsibilities in a global economy. We thank you for your consideration of this legislation, and look forward to its passage.

Sincerely,

Bobbie Kilberg
President & CEO

Brad Antle
Chairman

