



December 6, 2016

The Honorable Jeff Flake
United States Senate
413 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Flake:

On behalf of our nation's venture capital investors and the entrepreneurs they support, I write to express our strong support for the *Attracting and Retaining Entrepreneurs Act*, which will create American jobs at high-growth and innovative startups. We stand ready to help you advance this important legislation.

The U.S. is the envy of the world when it comes to startups and entrepreneurship. A key element of our dynamic economy is the outstanding contributions of immigrant entrepreneurs who choose to build and grow their businesses in the U.S., thus creating high-quality jobs. Some of the most iconic American brands, like Facebook, Google, Intel, Zipcar, and Tesla Motors, are venture-backed companies that have at least one immigrant founder. A 2013 NVCA study determined that fully one-third of U.S. venture-backed companies that went public between 2006 and 2012 had at least one immigrant founder. Furthermore, a 2016 study by the National Foundation for American Policy found that immigrants have started more than half (44 of 87) of America's startup companies valued at \$1 billion dollars or more.

Despite this success, immigrant entrepreneurs have not met their true potential because of the lack of a reliable immigration category, such as the startup visa created by your legislation. A startup visa is needed to correct the flaw in immigration law that generally prevents immigrant entrepreneurs from remaining in the U.S. unless they receive permanent residence through another visa category. Under the *Attracting and Retaining Entrepreneurs Act*, an immigrant entrepreneur would earn a "nonimmigrant invest visa" or "invest immigrant visa" if he or she has a significant ownership interest in a startup that receives requisite investment from an investor and meets other requirements.

The *Attracting and Retaining Entrepreneurs Act* is critically needed because the U.S. now faces a global competition for the world's best entrepreneurs. Other countries are implementing pro-startup policies to attract startup founders that will deliver jobs and economic

growth to their shores, which increases the odds that the ‘next big thing’ is created outside the U.S. China has attracted nearly \$20 billion in venture investment this year alone and is now the second largest destination in the world for venture capital. The European Union received \$12.8 billion in venture investment last year. In the last twenty years, the United States’ share of global venture capital investment has fallen from approximately 90% to 54%. The *Attracting and Retaining Entrepreneur Act* would help reverse this alarming trend by allowing talented immigrant entrepreneurs to build companies in the U.S. that employ Americans and revolutionize industries.

The entrepreneurial ecosystem thanks you for your leadership on this important issue and encourages Congress to take action on this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobby Franklin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bobby Franklin
President and CEO