

## Florida Board of Governors pauses new H-1B hiring, raising questions for Tallahassee universities

By Starr McKay| Staff Writer



**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** - Florida's Board of Governors has approved a temporary pause on hiring foreign workers through the federal H-1B visa program at state universities, a move that could impact faculty recruitment, research efforts and the local economy in Tallahassee.

During a meeting on Monday, March 2, the board voted to pause new H-1B hires across the State University System, which includes 12 public universities. The pause will remain while officials review how the program is used and evaluate potential costs associated with new visa policies.

The decision does not affect employees who are already working under H-1B visas, and universities may continue to renew existing visas during the review period.

H-1B visas allow United States employers to hire foreign professionals in specialized fields such as engineering, computer science, medicine and academic research. Universities often rely on

the program to recruit faculty members and researchers with expertise that can be difficult to find domestically.

State University System Chancellor Ray Rodrigues said the pause is meant to provide time for the state to evaluate the financial impact of potential federal policy changes.

“President Trump has announced that there will be a fee for any new H-1B visa,” Rodrigues said in the meeting. “We have to quantify what that impact is going to be for our system, do a cost benefit analysis of whether a \$100,000 fee for new H-1B visas makes sense.”

Rodrigues emphasized that the pause does not apply to current visa holders and that employees already working at universities will be able to remain on campus.

“The renewals are not subject to the \$100,000 fee, and the guideline is that if you are on campus now, you may remain on campus during the course of the pause,” Rodrigues said. “So if they were to come up during the pause, they are able to remain.”

Some observers say the pause could create challenges for universities that rely on international talent.

“I recognize that this is a pause and not a ban, but I do think this creates a serious reputational impact for our universities whenever they are going out and hiring,” said Carson Dale, a member of the Board of Governors and Florida State University student body president. “Even if it is just a one-year pause, I think that sends a message to people looking at Florida that it may not be a place they can count on to come and work.”

Universities in Tallahassee, including Florida State University and Florida A&M University, employ many international faculty members and researchers through the visa program. These employees often lead grant-funded research, contribute to scientific innovation and help train students entering fields such as health care, technology and engineering.

Board of Governors Chair Alan Levine argued against the pause, saying medical schools across the state university system depend on these visas.

Levine said that medical schools rely heavily on strong faculty staffing, particularly the ability to recruit specialists in high-need areas as well as in research and teaching, noting that the University of Florida has an especially large number of faculty members who depend on H-1B visas.

Supporters of the decision said the goal is to ensure hiring practices align with state priorities while officials gather more information about the program

The Board of Governors plans to revisit the policy after the review period ends in early 2027.