

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2018

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney  
Director  
The Office of Management and Budget  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

We write to reiterate the support for the State Department's J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, specifically the Summer Work Travel (SWT) program. As we have previously expressed to Secretary Tillerson, these programs are valuable tools of public diplomacy that build lasting goodwill around the world at no cost to American taxpayers.<sup>1</sup> We respectfully urge you to consider their positive effects on our economy and American soft power.

Each year, over 300,000 participants utilize the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program to come to the United States to learn English and experience American life while traveling, interning, conducting research and studying, teaching, receiving job training, and working in peak-season service sectors. In 2016, the individuals participating in the SWT program contributed approximately \$509 million to the U.S. economy.<sup>2</sup> American businesses have stressed the need for J-1 Exchange Program participants, who fill a need for seasonal staffing at a wide range of businesses in the tourism, restaurant, and resort industries.<sup>3</sup> In 2016, over 100,000 SWT participants contributed to our economy and a better understanding between nations and cultures as summer employees at restaurants, resorts, and amusement parks.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, J-1 visa recipients can serve as ambassadors of American values when they return to their home countries.

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program and SWT program offers important value both to the American communities that host visa recipients as well as to international diplomacy. As the Administration considers any changes to the J-1 visa program, we ask that the Administration

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from bipartisan group of Senators to Rex Tillerson, Sec. of State, U.S. Dep't of State (Aug. 8, 2017) (on file with S. Comm. on Homeland Sec. & Governmental Aff. staff).

<sup>2</sup> EurekaFacts, Summer Work Travel (SWT) Program Review 7 (Aug. 22, 2017), [http://www.alliance-exchange.org/sites/default/files/SWT%20Impact%20Evaluation%20Final%20Report\\_0.pdf](http://www.alliance-exchange.org/sites/default/files/SWT%20Impact%20Evaluation%20Final%20Report_0.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Laura Meckler, *Trump Administration Considering Cuts to Cultural Exchange Visas: Summer Work Travel, Au Pair Visas Under Review*, Wall St. J. (Aug. 27, 2017), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-administration-considering-cuts-to-summer-work-visas-1503857856>; Alliance for International Exchange, *Fact Sheet: Summer Work Travel (SWT) Exchange Program* (2016), [https://www.alliance-exchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SWT\\_2016.pdf](https://www.alliance-exchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SWT_2016.pdf) (last visited Mar. 16, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Dep't of State, *J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program: Participant and Sponsor Totals* (2016), <https://j1visa.state.gov/basics/facts-and-figures/participant-and-sponsor%20totals/?program=Summer+Work+Travel&state=&x=16&y=10> (last visited Mar. 16, 2018).

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seek comment from all stakeholders to fully assess the consequences for our economy and our diplomatic soft power.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson  
Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security  
and Governmental Affairs



Jeanne Shaheen  
U.S. Senator



Frank A. LoBiondo  
Member of Congress



William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Claire McCaskill  
Ranking Member, Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

The Honorable John Sullivan  
Deputy Secretary, Department of State