

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 7, 2017

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Leahy:

Thank you for your continued support of U.S. Department of State Educational and Cultural Exchange programs, which are a proven and cost-effective way for the United States to remain internationally competitive, develop American leaders, engage current and future international leaders, and promote American values. These programs support the global engagement that is critical to our country's prosperity and security. Unfortunately, the President's Fiscal Year 2018 budget blueprint significantly reduces funding for almost all of these programs. We request that you continue Congress's long bipartisan support for State Department's exchange programs by maintaining Fiscal Year 2017 funding levels.

With Congress' support, the range of State Department exchange programs connect emerging leaders, entrepreneurs, youth, educators, and athletes from the United States to others in more than 160 countries around the world, dramatically increasing America's global reach. Exchanges are a key instrument in the U.S. foreign policy toolbox and essential to strengthening U.S. global leadership, while building respect and a web of partnerships based on shared interests and mutual ties around the world. Results repeatedly show that participants visiting the United States through exchange programs return to their home countries with a better impression of our country, the American people, and our values. U.S. ambassadors consistently rank exchange programs among the most useful catalysts for long-term political change and mutual understanding.

To date, there are more than one million alumni of State Department exchange programs. Exchange program alumni include more than 395 current and former Heads of State, more than 1,700 cabinet-level ministers, and key leaders from around the world.

Support from Congress allows the State Department to strategically align its programs with key U.S. foreign policy interests and to facilitate exchange experiences for more than 55,000 American and international exchange participants each year, including:

- Bringing emerging and future leaders – many of them from countries key to U.S. national security interests – to the U.S. on programs like the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program for high school students from Eurasia; the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program between the U.S. and countries with significant Muslim

populations; the Young Leaders Initiatives in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Americas; and the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP);

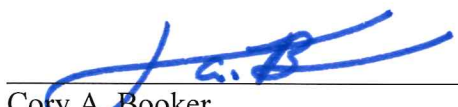
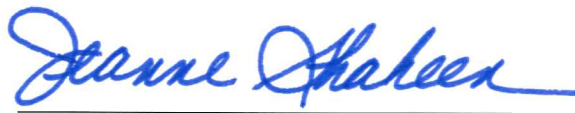
- Engaging students from around the world in the Peer 2 Peer Challenging Extremism program to develop campaigns and social media strategies against extremism;
- Supporting international innovation and collaboration in technology through programs like TechWomen and TechGirls;
- Expanding opportunities for young Americans, including students receiving Pell Grants, to study abroad through the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program;
- Continuing to engage students and scholars through the renowned Fulbright Program; and
- Engaging and training young professionals through programs such as the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX);

Finally, State Department exchange programs are a cost-effective investment that provides significant and immediate economic impact in communities across the country. Exchange visitors do business with small businesses, airlines, hotels, and non-governmental organizations in local communities, and their presence at our colleges and universities supports academic institutions throughout the country.

The record 1,043,000 international students studying at our colleges and universities during the 2015-16 academic year contributed \$32.8 billion to the U.S. economy and supported more than 400,000 jobs across the country, according to NAFSA: Association of International Educators. These data do not account for the contributions the thousands of exchange participants that are not students at higher education institutions make to our economy every year.


We respectfully request that you enable the continued success of these vital programs and appropriate Fiscal Year 2017 funding level for Department of State educational and cultural exchange programs in Fiscal Year 2018.

Sincerely,


Cory A. Booker
United States Senator
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



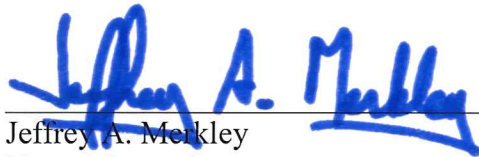
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



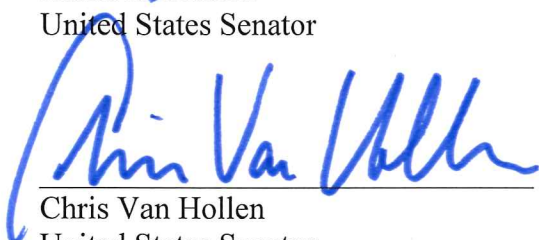
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



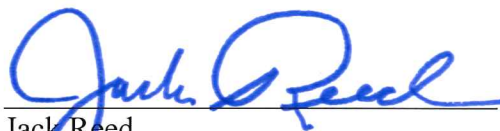
Mazie Hirono
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



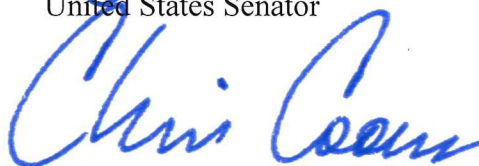
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



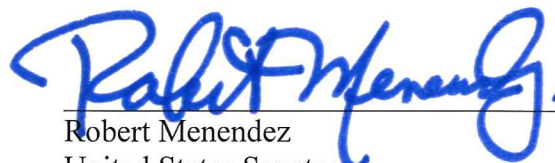
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



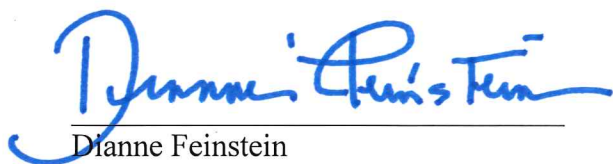
Al Franken
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator




Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



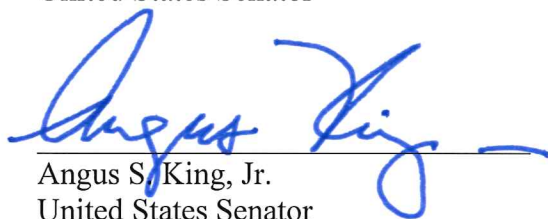
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator