

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 21, 2020

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Defense of State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Senate Committee on Appropriations
127 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Department of State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Senate Committee on Appropriations
125 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 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. We request that you continue Congress' long bipartisan support for State Department's educational and cultural exchange programs by including the highest possible funding level in Fiscal Year 2021.

With Congress' support, a range of State Department exchange programs connect emerging leaders, entrepreneurs, youth, educators, and athletes from the United States to their counterparts 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 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, including hundreds of world leaders, 105 Pulitzer Prize winners, and 84 Nobel Laureates. According to the State Department, more than 570 current or former heads of government, 64 representatives to the United Nations, and 31 heads of international organizations have been on a State Department exchange program. 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);
- 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 1,095,299 international students studying at our colleges and universities during the 2018-2019 academic year contributed \$41 billion to the U.S. economy and supported 458,290 jobs across the country, which are all increases from the previous academic year 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 the highest possible funding level for Department of State educational and cultural exchange programs in Fiscal Year 2021.

Sincerely,

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher S. Murphy

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith

Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Jeanne Shaheen

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/ Doug Jones

Doug Jones
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

/s/ Gary C. Peters

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

/s/ Maria Cantwell

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/ Brian Schatz

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/ Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

/s/ Angus S. King

Angus S. King
United States Senator

/s/ Michael F. Bennet

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/ Kyrsten Sinema

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Mark R. Warner

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine
United States Senator