



August 31, 2020

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Smith and Inhofe, and Ranking Members Thornberry and Reed:

The Alliance for International Exchange supports the inclusion of the Au Pair program in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021. In the House passed bill, section 563 was amended to expand benefits to include live-in care, including the federal au pair program. As such, the bill provides the opportunity for military au pair host families to gain financial assistance. By including the Au Pair cultural exchange program, Congress would bolster our national security through people-to-people diplomacy.

The Au Pair program is particularly important to military families as they provide stability for the children when a parent is deployed, offer consistency should the family be relocated domestically as the au pair will move with them, and they are able to support the State Department in their efforts to further foreign diplomacy. Also, au pairs provide an additional layer of safety and security because they don't leave the home to go to another residence each evening. Au pairs are an integral part of the family which gives parents reassurance that there are no unnecessary risks posed to the household during the pandemic.

For more than 30 years, the Au Pair program has provided an opportunity for participants and American host families to experience mutually rewarding cultural exchange. In a recent study by EurekaFacts, an independent research firm, they found that 97 percent of au pairs gain a better understanding of American culture, while approximately nine-in-ten host families say they develop a better understanding of their au pair's culture (88 percent). Additionally, EurekaFacts found that the 11 percent of host families are veterans or on active duty. These families, like other hosts, find that au pairs fill a unique need by providing live-in child-care and cultural enrichment simultaneously. Please see attached a fact sheet for the EurekaFacts report.

We support inclusion of the Au Pair program in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ilir Zherka".

Ilir Zherka
Executive Director