



Text of Message from Senator Cory Booker to participants at 2021 Annual Meeting of Alliance for International Exchange

November 10, 2021

Thank you, Alliance for international Exchange for this invitation to join you today. Let me tell you, I do join the Alliance in extending my welcome to all the participants from around the United States and the globe. As all of you know, international exchange programs are critical to increasing the best of human values, mutual understanding, empathy, democracy and strengthening the well-being and quality of life for people all across the United States and the international community. We are many people on this planet earth, but we have one common destiny, and it is cultural exchange programs like this one which are proven, and absolutely help to achieve those larger goals of humanity.

And for us, it's a cost-effective way for the United States to remain internationally engaged, internationally competitive and to help to continue to forward our highest democratic principles. So I know that in programs like this we are engaging the future leaders of the world and promoting the best of our values. These programs are important to New Jersey. They're important to our nation. They're important, I think, to humanity.

You know, in normal years, over 8000 visitors participate in privately funded exchange programs in New Jersey, contributing a total of over \$54 million to our state's economy. In addition, international students in the state contributed over \$823 million and support over 9000 American jobs this is an incredible contribution.

And so, every year, I'm proud to sponsor a Dear Colleague letter in support of federal funding for exchange programs. This year 29 other Senators and I supported the Alliance's appropriation request for \$1.1 billion towards educational and cultural exchange programs. It's a level of funding which is long overdue.

For many of you, this pandemic has prevented the normal flow of international travel which has really damaged and hurt the American economy and it's impacted our foreign policy goals and all of the ambitious goals of our foreign exchange programs. Last year the Alliance estimated that the COVID-19 impact on international exchange community world could cost nearly 7000 jobs or nearly \$233 million to our economy.

Unfortunately, 2021 has continued to be a challenging year for the exchange community. Despite all these challenges, this is finally beginning to turn around and there is hope again on the horizon and I believe that the Biden administration that I applaud for announcing a lifting of COVID-19 travel bans on November 8, this is a time that we know we can begin to see the flow open again for participants visiting the United States through



exchange programs and return to their countries with a better impression of who we are as Americans. Our people. Our values. Our light in this world.

I'm excited and I'll tell you this. I want you to continue to support this program. You all are such a powerful catalyst for positive change and mutual understanding. I wish you all the best in the conference. I look forward to continuing to work with the Alliance and its members to strengthen the impact of international programs.

I stand with you. I'm excited about you. And I wish you all the best.