



Office of the Governor

November 9, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

I write to express my support in maintaining the J-1 visa Exchange Visitor Program in its current size, regulatory structure, and operation under the Department of State. I cannot overstate the importance of these programs to Nevada's economy, the health and sustainability of our local resort communities, and the viability of the businesses in Nevada that rely on both the cultural exchange and economic benefits provided by J-1 visa exchange program participants—all at no cost to the taxpayer.

First and foremost, the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program – including the Summer Work Travel, Au Pair, Camp Counselor, Intern, and Trainee programs – provide a critical cultural diplomacy tool for our country, dating back more than 50 years. The participants are college students and young professionals from more than 200 nations, the future leaders in their home countries. These programs broaden the experiences of our American communities and build lasting international personal and professional relationships between American hosts and international participants.

Furthermore, J-1 exchange programs, especially Summer Work Travel (SWT), also provide crucial economic and seasonal labor benefits—both during summer *and* winter—to many businesses in areas with chronically small labor pools. Any reductions or significant changes to the J-1 visa programs would have dramatic and negative impacts on seasonal businesses in Nevada, especially on those located in rural or remote areas, far from metropolitan areas where labor is more plentiful.

Our seasonal and resort employers that host most of the J-1 SWT students go to extraordinary lengths to find American employees, such as job fairs in urban areas and on college campuses near and far from the employment locations, extensive benefits, flexible work schedules, and assistance with transportation and housing. But due to low unemployment rates, lack of local labor, aging workers, and housing and transportation challenges, these businesses cannot fill all of their available positions.

The J-1 SWT program is particularly important to summer and winter resort operators, youth camps, hospitality, travel and tourism, food and beverage concessionaires, and seasonal businesses struggling to satisfy their workplace needs. Even *with* access to the SWT program, many seasonal businesses are unable to fill many of their available positions due to labor shortages. From our collective experience, the SWT program does not displace American workers—in fact, it allows seasonal businesses to hire *more* Americans, and even raise wages. Indeed, these seasonal businesses typically only have a short window of time to generate much of their annual revenue, upon which much of the year-round American labor force, and business owners, depend. Without adequate labor, these businesses cannot thrive, and in turn contribute taxes to our local and state economies.

During this current period of low rates of unemployment across the country, local workers enjoy the benefit of obtaining year-round employment, leaving seasonal businesses—especially those businesses in rural or remote locations—desperate for workers. Such businesses are the economic engines of our rural communities, including beach and lake resorts, ski areas, amusement parks, restaurants and lodging facilities, campgrounds, and park concessionaires. Most of these businesses pay far above the federal minimum wage to attract labor, but still cannot find the workers they need. That is why the J-1 visa SWT program remains essential.

Additionally, other J-1 exchange programs contribute significantly to American families and businesses in Nevada. The Au Pair Program supports American working families by providing an affordable and culturally rich child care option. The Camp Counselor Program supports a fixture of the summer for many young Americans, sleep-away camp. These international counselors from all over the world provide a unique, global experience for young American campers, and support American camps in remote locations that cannot fill their counselor ranks with only local staff. In addition, the Intern and Trainee Programs bring future business leaders to train with American companies, creating new international partnerships and supporting American business development abroad.

As Governor, it is important to provide good-paying jobs for all of our constituents. Among many benefits, the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program allows businesses to grow, generate higher revenues, and contribute more to our State and local economies, especially in our rural communities. I will continue to work with the Nevada congressional delegation to emphasize the importance of these programs.

Simply put, I strongly recommend that you keep all J-1 visa programs robust and at current levels.

Sincere regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Sandoval", written in a cursive style.

BRIAN SANDOVAL

Governor