

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 481

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that BridgeUSA exchange programs are vital to the economy and national interests of the United States, and that Congress should prioritize robust support to ensure equitable opportunities for Americans and people from other countries.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 7, 2023

Mr. MOORE of Utah (for himself, Ms. KUSTER, Mr. PAPPAS, Mr. GALLAGHER, and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that BridgeUSA exchange programs are vital to the economy and national interests of the United States, and that Congress should prioritize robust support to ensure equitable opportunities for Americans and people from other countries.

Whereas BridgeUSA (formerly the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program) was created alongside the Peace Corps and United States Agency for International Development during the Cold War to promote the diplomatic and foreign affairs goals of the United States, goals the Department of State still advances in administering BridgeUSA as Federal cultural exchange programs to this day;

Whereas roughly 300,000 participants from more than 200 countries and territories visit the United States on a J-1 cultural exchange visa each year;

Whereas the work component of certain BridgeUSA programs, the largest public diplomacy program offered by the United States, makes travel to the United States possible for a broad and diverse group of international students and young people;

Whereas 91 percent of Summer Work Travel (SWT) Program participants report cultural exchange as their top reason for participating in the Program;

Whereas 84 percent of Camp Counselors report having a more positive view of America after working at a camp;

Whereas 76 percent of SWT Program participants reported a positive change in views regarding the United States;

Whereas 50 percent of employers stated that the absence of the SWT Program participants would have a negative impact on revenues;

Whereas 39 percent of employers said they would have to reduce hours of operation without the SWT Program;

Whereas annually the ski industry embraces more than 8,000 SWT participants from the Southern Hemisphere who provide a richer cultural experience for their coworkers and guests, while learning important skills about the recreation and hospitality business and at the same time generating significant economic impacts, spending, and taxes in communities where they are located;

Whereas there are similar cultural and economic benefits among participants from the Northern Hemisphere who are placed in small rural communities that attract large

crowds in the summer at national parks, amusement parks, attractions, and resorts across the country;

Whereas 91 percent of host camps believe their organization would be negatively impacted by the absence of international Camp Counselors;

Whereas 78 percent of host camps indicated that camp services and activities would be reduced in the absence of international Camp Counselors;

Whereas while the number of BridgeUSA participants decreased dramatically in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic and travel restrictions, participation levels are rapidly increasing back to prepandemic numbers to meet significant demand for the programs;

Whereas BridgeUSA work-based public diplomacy programs typically contribute over half a billion dollars to the United States economy annually; and

Whereas Congress supports the Department of State's ongoing commitment to protect the health, safety, and welfare of students and exchange visitors, and continued attention to strengthening cultural exchange and the experience of all participants: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that—

3 (1) BridgeUSA programs are vital to the econ-
4 omy and national interests of the United States;

5 (2) BridgeUSA should continue with robust
6 support from the Department of State to further
7 those national interests;

1 (3) the processing of J-1 BridgeUSA visas
2 should be prioritized at United States Embassies
3 and consulates to ensure the program's public diplo-
4 macy goals are met; and

5 (4) Congress and implementing partners should
6 be consulted on any major changes to BridgeUSA
7 programs given the significant national security and
8 economic impacts of the program.

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