

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 27, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

We write to express our concerns with allegations that the U.S. Commercial Service has been directed to reduce its support for international education. It is our hope that the Department of Commerce can clarify its position and reaffirm its longstanding commitment to assist American academic institutions in bringing talented international students to their classrooms.

In a letter dated December 14, 2017 to Mr. Israel Hernandez, your former deputy chief of staff performing the duties of Under Secretary for International Trade, Dr. Jing Luan of Study California expressed his concerns with reports that the U.S. Commercial Service was directed to remove education from its strategic vision and reduce its support for international education. Dr. Luan's letter was co-signed by the state study consortia of Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, and Texas, demonstrating widespread concerns from education professionals and administrators across the country.

Any policy limiting or ending the U.S. Commercial Service's support for education service exports would be damaging for American educational institutions and our economy. The U.S. Commercial Service plays a critical and irreplaceable role in supporting international education in the United States. With over 100 offices located in over 75 countries, the U.S. Commercial Service and its team of education specialists provide global reach in assisting American educational institutions with international market research, recruitment fairs, webinars, virtual education events, institutional partnerships through the Gold Key Matching Service, and school promotion.

Due to close collaborative partnerships between the federal government and college recruiters, education service exports are a key component of the U.S. economy. According to the U.S. Commercial Service, education, one of the few industries in which the U.S. enjoys a substantial trade surplus, ranked seventh among service exports in 2015. There were over a million

international students in the United States in 2015, contributing over \$35.7 billion to our economy in tuition and living expenses that year.¹ Another estimate suggests that the direct economic benefit of international students tops \$50 billion a year.² According to an analysis by NAFSA: The Association of International Educators, international students created or supported over 450,000 jobs in the U.S. economy during the 2016-2017 academic year.³

The benefits brought by international students to the United States extend more broadly throughout our society. The higher tuitions paid by international students subsidize the costs of college education for Americans. International students bring diverse perspectives into our classrooms, preparing American students for global careers, and participate in valuable scientific and technical research. Following graduation, many international students choose to stay and contribute to the American economy: nearly one-quarter of U.S. startup companies valued at \$1 billion or more had a founder who first began as an international student in the U.S.⁴

International education is a growing part of the global economy. In 2000, there were just 2.1 million international students in the world. Today, there are over 5 million. The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates that there will be over 8 million international students by 2025.⁵ However, in 2001, the United States hosted 28 percent of all international students in the world; by 2016, that number declined to 22 percent. Recognizing the significant benefits that international students bring to their economies and societies, other countries such as Australia, Canada, China, and Russia have set ambitious targets and enacted policies to attract more students. These countries know that international education is an effective way of improving their economies, attracting foreign talent, and increasing their soft power abroad.

We therefore request clarification of the Department's policies towards international education and urge you to affirm and maintain the Department's longstanding support for international education through the U.S. Commercial Service. International students strengthen our economy, further our scientific and technological innovation, and enrich American classrooms. Upholding the U.S. Commercial Service's valuable assistance to American academic institutions would perpetuate these valuable benefits.

¹ U.S. Commercial Service, *Education and Training Services Resource Guide: A Reference for U.S. Institutions*, 2017 edition, U.S. Department of Commerce.

² Dick Startz, "Sealing the border could block one of America's crucial exports: Education," The Brookings Institution, 31 January 2017, accessed from: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/01/31/sealing-the-border-could-block-one-of-americas-crucial-exports-education/>.

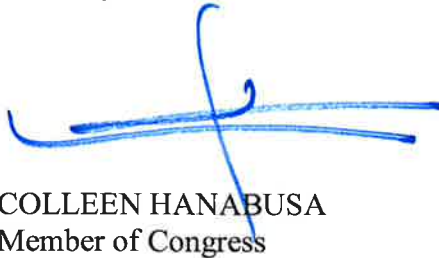
³ "NAFSA International Student Economic Value Tool," NAFSA: The Association of International Educators, accessed from: http://www.nafsa.org/Policy_and_Advocacy/Policy_Resources/Policy_Trends_and_Data/NAFSA_International_Student_Economic_Value_Tool/.

⁴ "Research: Immigrants Started More Than Half of America's Billion Dollar Startup Companies," National Foundation for American Policy, 17 March 2016, accessed from: <http://nfap.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Immigrants-and-Billion-Dollar-Startups.DAY-OF-RELEASE.March-17-2016.pdf>.

⁵ *2016 Top Markets Report: Education*, International Trade Administration, May 2016, accessed from: https://www.trade.gov/topmarkets/pdf/Education_Top_Markets_Report.pdf.

We look forward to your response and appreciate your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



MICHAEL E. CAPUANO
Member of Congress



JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress



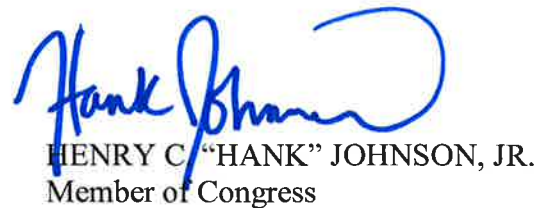
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