

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2022

The Honorable Christopher Coons
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Department of State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Senate Committee on Appropriations
127 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Department of State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Senate Committee on Appropriations
125 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Graham:

Thank you for your continued support of U.S. Department of State educational and cultural exchange programs, which are a proven and cost-effective way for the United States to remain internationally competitive, develop American leaders, engage current and future international leaders, and promote American values. These programs support the global engagement that is critical to our country's prosperity and security. We request that you continue Congress' long bipartisan support for the State Department's educational and cultural exchange programs by appropriating \$1.1 billion or the highest possible funding level in Fiscal Year 2023.

With Congress' support, a range of State Department exchange programs connect emerging leaders, entrepreneurs, youth, educators, and athletes from the United States to their counterparts in more than 160 countries around the world, dramatically increasing America's global reach. Exchanges are a key instrument in the U.S. foreign policy toolbox and essential to strengthening U.S. global leadership, while building respect and partnerships based on shared interests and mutual ties around the world. Results repeatedly show that participants visiting the United States through exchange programs return to their home countries with a better impression of our country, the American people, and our values. U.S. ambassadors consistently rank exchange programs among the most useful catalysts for long-term political change and mutual understanding.

To date, there are more than one million alumni of State Department exchange programs, including hundreds of world leaders, 105 Pulitzer Prize winners, and 84 Nobel Laureates. According to the State Department, more than 590 current or former heads of government, 64 representatives to the United Nations, 31 heads of international organizations, and 42 current Members of Congress have been on a State Department exchange program. Support from Congress allows the State Department to strategically align its programs with key U.S. foreign policy interests and to facilitate exchange experiences for more than 55,000 American and international exchange participants each year, including:

- Bringing emerging and future leaders – many of them from countries key to U.S. national security interests – to the U.S. on programs like the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX)

Program for high school students from Eurasia; the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program between the U.S. and countries with significant Muslim populations; the Young Leaders Initiatives in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Americas; and the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP);

- Supporting international innovation and collaboration in technology through programs like TechWomen and TechGirls;
- Expanding opportunities for young Americans, including students receiving Pell Grants, to study abroad through the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program;
- Engaging and training young professionals through programs such as the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX); and
- Continuing to engage students and scholars through the renowned Fulbright Program.

Finally, State Department exchange programs are a cost-effective investment that provides significant and immediate economic impact in communities across the country. More than 90% of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs budget goes to American organizations, businesses, and individuals. Furthermore, exchange visitors do business with small businesses, airlines, hotels, and non-governmental organizations in local communities, and their presence at our colleges and universities supports academic institutions throughout the country.

The 1,075,496 international students studying at our colleges and universities during the 2019-2020 academic year contributed \$38 billion to the U.S. economy and supported 415,996 jobs across the country, according to NAFSA: Association of International Educators. The data does not account for the contributions the thousands of exchange participants that are not students at higher education institutions make to our economy every year. However, the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected these important contributions—the 2019-2020 academic year alone saw a \$1.8 billion decrease.

While pre-pandemic levels of international exchange will not return immediately, we respectfully request that you enable the continued success of these vital programs and appropriate \$1.1 billion or the highest possible funding level for Department of State educational and cultural exchange programs in Fiscal Year 2023.

Sincerely,



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



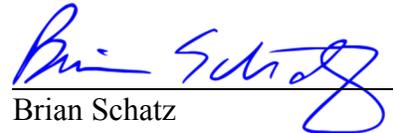
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator



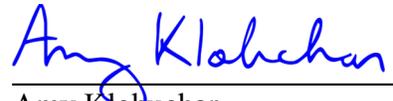
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



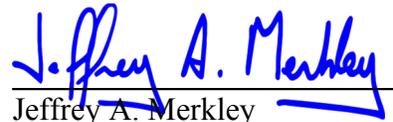
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



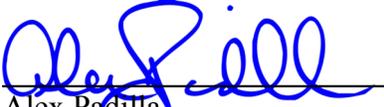
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



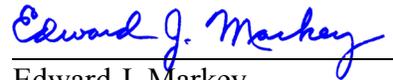
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



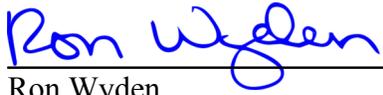
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator