

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 13, 2026

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security, Dept.
Of State and Related Programs
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lois Frankel
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security, Dept.
Of State and Related Programs
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Frankel:

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, advance our global influence, and make our country stronger by creating future American leaders and sharing our nation's story with emerging leaders around the world. At a time of heightened global competition, ensuring that these programs are fully funded and allowed to operate as Congress intends is essential.

We request that you continue Congress' long bipartisan support for State Department educational and cultural exchange programs by appropriating \$700.95 million in Fiscal Year 2027, which is equal to the bipartisan topline that was passed out of the House Appropriations Committee in FY 2026.

In 2025, Department of State international exchange programs faced unprecedented disruptions, including frozen funds and the complete withholding of grants for certain congressionally appropriated programs. In response, Congress included strong oversight language in the FY26 appropriations bill to ensure that funds provided for exchanges are utilized consistent with Congressional intent. We respectfully request that this oversight language be retained in the FY27 bill and that appropriated funds for exchange programs be released in a timely manner so programs can proceed as authorized.

Funding for ECA's international exchange programs directly benefit American communities and the American people. Ensuring that these programs remain robustly funded and that Congress retains strong oversight will safeguard these contributions for the future.

State Department exchange programs are a cost-effective investment that provides significant and immediate economic impact in communities across the country, thereby bolstering the American economy nationwide. More than 90% of the appropriation for educational and cultural exchange programs goes to American organizations, businesses, and individuals. Furthermore, exchange visitors support American businesses and local communities through their travel, hotel nights, and other expenses during their stay, and their presence at our colleges and universities support academic institutions throughout the country.

- International students studying at our colleges and universities during the 2024-25 academic year contributed \$42.9 billion to the U.S. economy and supported more than 355,000 jobs across the country, according to NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

- 100 partner governments contribute over \$100 million annually to the Fulbright program.
- The International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) creates a 12-to-1 return on investment for American taxpayers through the generation of \$12 from American NGOs for every dollar spent by the federal government.

Additionally, exchange programs are flexible tools to achieve the Administration's policy priorities and ensure America's global influence such as creating a united and economically prosperous Western Hemisphere via exchanges with Canada, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. These programs help America to strategically engage and counter China through exchanges with Chinese students, professionals, and diplomats. Additionally, through exchanges, the United States has growing influence in South America via programs with Peru, Brazil, Argentina, and more.

Exchange programs strengthen all parts of American society. 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);
- 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 also connect emerging leaders, entrepreneurs, youth, educators, and athletes from the United States to their counterparts in more than 155 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 by building trusted relationships that position the United States to compete and influence globally.

According to the State Department, more than 660 current or former heads of government, and 42 current or former Members of Congress have been on a State Department exchange program.

We respectfully request that you enable the continued success of these vital programs, without which the U.S. would unnecessarily undermine our nation's security, economic opportunities, and soft power, while ceding ground to other competitors and adversaries. We urge you to appropriate no less than \$700.95 million for Department of State educational and cultural exchange programs in Fiscal Year 2027.

Sincerely,



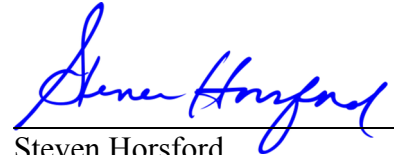
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



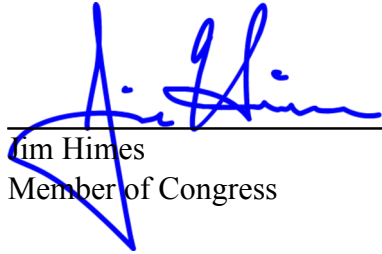
Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



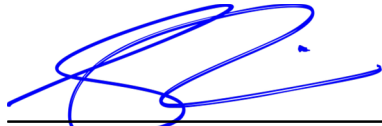
Steven Horsford
Member of Congress



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



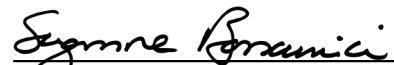
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



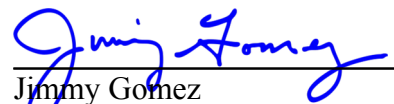
Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



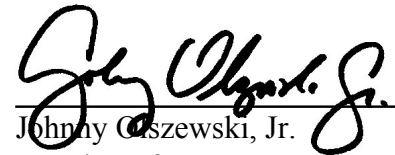
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Laura Friedman
Member of Congress



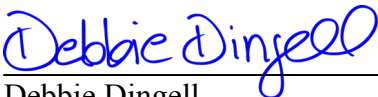
Johnny Ciszewski, Jr.
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Andre Carson
Member of Congress



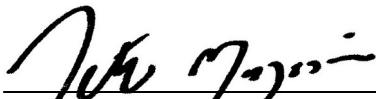
Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress




Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



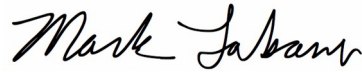
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



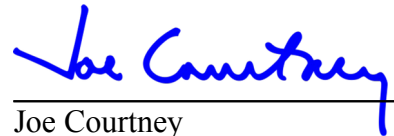
Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress




Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



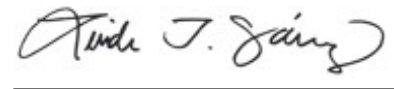
Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress




James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



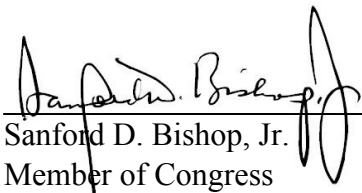
Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



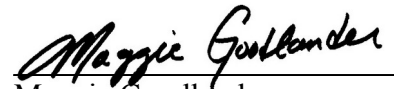
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress




Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress




Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



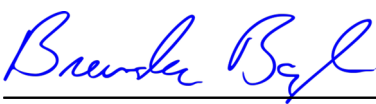
Maggie Goodlander
Member of Congress



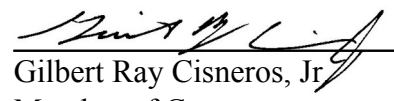
Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



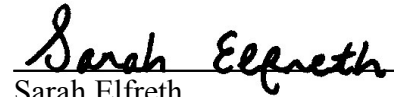
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



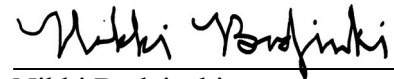
Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



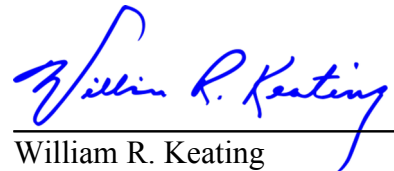
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



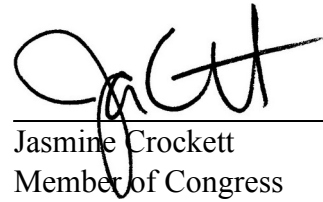
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



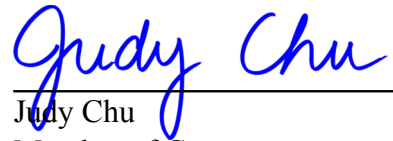
Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



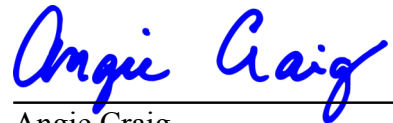
Bradley Scott Schneider
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Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



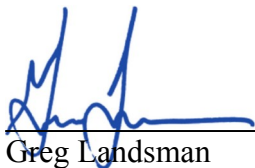
Angie Craig
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



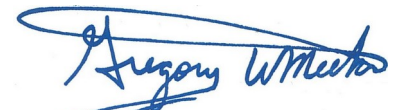
Greg Landsman
Member of Congress




Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress



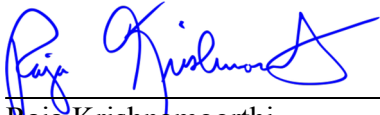
Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernandez
Member of Congress



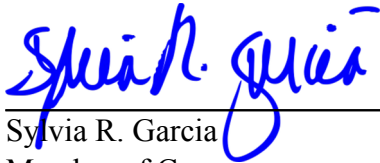
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



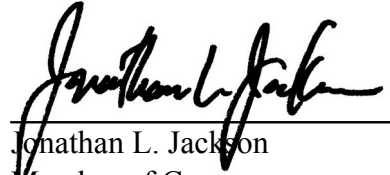
Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



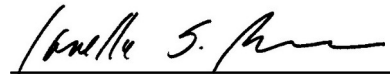
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



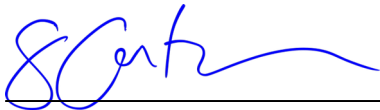
Janelle S. Bynum
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



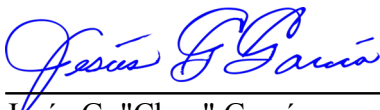
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



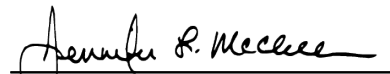
Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



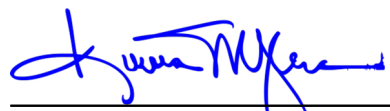
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



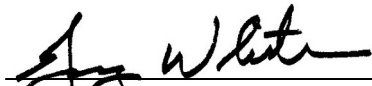
Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress




SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress




Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress




George Whitesides
Member of Congress



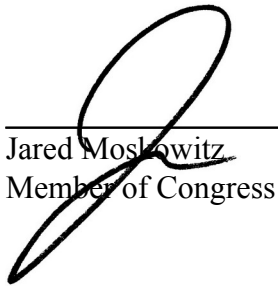
Luz M. Rivas
Member of Congress



Derek T. Tran
Member of Congress



James R. Baird, PhD
Member of Congress



Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress