March 16, 2018

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman, Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations and Related Programs
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Room H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on State,
Foreign Operations and Related Programs
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: U.S. Department of State educational and cultural exchange programs for Fiscal Year 2019

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

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 global engagement that is critical to our country’s prosperity and security. We respectfully request that you enable the continued success of these vital programs and appropriate the highest possible funding level for U.S. Department of State educational and cultural exchange programs in Fiscal Year 2019.

Through professional, academic, cultural, and athletic exchanges, these programs reach emerging leaders, entrepreneurs, youth, students, educators, and athletes in the United States and more than 160 countries around the world, dramatically increasing America’s global reach. 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 approximately 350,000 American and international exchange participants, including:

- Bringing emerging and future leaders — many of them from countries key to U.S. foreign policy interests — to the U.S. on programs like the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program, and the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program;
- Continuing to engage students and scholars through the renowned Fulbright Program;
- Engaging and training young professionals through programs such as the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX);
- Expanding opportunities for young Americans to study and research abroad;
- Broadening engagement with youth, women and girls, as well as program alumni; and
- Expanding the virtual exchanges portfolio, allowing for a strong public diplomacy impact on a growing audience worldwide.

Exchanges are imperative for U.S. national security

State Department exchange programs allow the U.S. to engage with a diverse audience and emerging leaders from around the world, many of them from countries key to our national security interests. Exchanges are a key instrument in the U.S. foreign policy toolbox and essential to strengthening U.S. global leadership, while building respect and a web of partnerships based on shared interests and mutual ties around the world.
American students studying abroad through State Department exchange programs are ambassadors of the next generation of American leaders, highlighting our most promising young people and promoting American values around the world. State Department evaluations repeatedly show that international exchange participants who visit the United States complete their programs with a better impression of our country, the American people, and our values. U.S. ambassadors around the world consistently rank exchange programs among the most useful catalysts for long-term political change and mutual understanding.

**Exchanges benefit Americans and help keep America competitive**

State Department exchanges provide opportunities for Americans – as exchange participants and as hosts – to build international experience and connections, and gain cross-cultural skills necessary for success in the global marketplace, including expertise in languages critical to business and national security and the establishment of key relationships around the world. State Department exchanges facilitate the development of a substantial cohort of Americans who have the skills, knowledge, and contacts to navigate effectively across cultures and economies.

**Exchanges are a cost-effective investment that brings resources to U.S. communities**

State Department exchange programs are a cost-effective investment that not only enhances America’s long-term competitiveness but also provides significant and immediate economic impact in communities across the country. Most of the State Department exchanges budget is spent either on Americans, American businesses and organizations, or in the United States. International students studying at our colleges and universities during the 2016-2017 academic year contributed $36.9 billion to the U.S. economy and supported 450,331 jobs across the country, according to NAFSA: Association of International Educators. They do business with American small businesses, airlines, hotels, and nongovernmental organizations in local communities, and their presence at our colleges and universities supports academic institutions throughout the country.

We respectfully request that you make a smart and effective investment in our country’s foreign policy, as well as local communities across the United States, by funding U.S. Department of State international exchange programs at the highest possible funding level in Fiscal Year 2019.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress

Marjorie DeSisto
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress

Elizabetth H. Esty
Member of Congress

Sander Levin
Member of Congress

Eliot Engel
Member of Congress

John Sarbanes
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Eric Swalwell
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John B. Larson
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Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Tim Walz
Member of Congress

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress
Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

Jim Langevin
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsuck
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Steve Pearce
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress
Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress  

Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress  

Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress  

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress  

William R. Keating  
Member of Congress  

A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress  

Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress  

Gregorio Kilili Casmao Sablan  
Member of Congress  

Ruben J. Hinojosa  
Member of Congress  

Adam Smith  
Member of Congress  

Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress  

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress  

Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress