

COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Promoting U.S. Global Competence

July 17, 2024

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito,

The undersigned organizations express deep appreciation to the subcommittee for your continued bipartisan support for the U.S. Department of Education's International and Foreign Language Education programs. We are especially grateful for the subcommittee's increased funding provided in FY 2020 through FY 2023 that resulted in a cumulative increase of \$13.5 million for these critical programs. Moreover, we thank you for insuring level funding for FY 2024, thus preventing a step backwards from Congressional efforts to restore their capacity. The economic well-being and national security of the United States depends substantially on its citizens' ability to communicate and compete by knowing the languages and cultures of other countries. This funding is crucial for our nation's prosperity and safety.

As the subcommittee begins work on the FY 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, **we support the letter from 25 Senators led by Sens. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Todd Young (R-IN) requesting robust funding for International Education and Foreign Language Studies in FY 2025. In this context, we strongly recommend \$91 million, including \$79.9 million for HEA-Title VI and \$11 million for Fulbright-Hays 102(b)(6) programs, a 6% increase adjusting for combined FY 2023 and FY 2024 inflation.** We believe this request would continue the gradual progress of restoring funding to FY 2010 levels, which is ever so urgent for addressing rising national needs for international expertise and global competencies in our increasingly contested world. **We must make sure that any overall budget cuts are not made at the expense of strategic national interests.**

High-level international and foreign language expertise are of vital importance to our defense, intelligence, and diplomatic communities in order to cope with expanding and escalating threats in multiple world regions, such as the wars in the Middle East, Russia/Ukraine, and Africa, as well as challenges in the Asian Pacific region. In this context, growing security challenges in other issue areas such as global health, environment, energy, law enforcement, food production, cyber security and more, increasingly rely on professional level foreign language abilities, cultural and regional knowledge, and experience abroad. One example is the 2023 Center for Strategic and International Studies report on strengthening the Centers for Disease Control's global mission by emphasizing the need for its staff to undergo training in world language and cultural skills to build

a global workforce with the knowledge and experience to effectively confront emerging outbreaks at home and around the world. Meanwhile, U.S. employers seek more graduates with international business, language and cultural competencies to help restore and strengthen the U.S. economy in today's evolving and increasingly competitive global markets, such as Africa and Latin America.

HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays are the nation's foundational programs for building and strengthening an interdisciplinary infrastructure in international and foreign language studies and research, especially in the less-commonly taught languages and world areas that hold strategic interest for the U.S. at home and abroad. Unfortunately, the U.S. lags behind other nations in the percentage of its citizens who know a second language. What's more, the Modern Language Association's 2021 language enrollment census found a 16.6% decline in language enrollments at U.S. colleges and universities since 2016, the highest decline since the census began in 1958. The final report also revealed a nearly 70% correlation between language enrollments and Title VI funding between 1998 – 2023. Confronting our present and future global challenges requires urgent action to address this troubling decline and prioritize world language education.

To safeguard our nation's capacity on all world areas and languages during current and potential future global crises, we must continuously replenish our pool of professionals with international expertise. This requires increasing strong academic programs in critical world languages, intensive training in multi-disciplinary regional and international studies, and international business programs that are vital to our key national priorities. Robust federal funding is also essential to ensuring that students from all racial and socio-economic backgrounds can access these high-quality educational programs. Decisive action is needed to fortify our nation's capabilities for a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Comprehensive regional and global expertise is today more crucial than ever for our nation's security and well-being. Any funding reductions to these *critical bipartisan programs* would seriously hinder recent and long-awaited efforts by Congress to strengthen and restore their capacity and interdisciplinary infrastructure, which is vital for addressing our escalating global challenges. The time for action is now to strengthen these programs and secure the future of our nation in an increasingly complex global environment.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and steadfast support for these programs.

Submitted by the following 29 organizations:

African Studies Association

Alliance for International Exchange

American Association of Community Colleges

American Council of Learned Societies

American Councils for International Education

ACTFL: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

American Historical Association

American Political Science Association

Association for Asian Studies

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Association for International Business Education and Research
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Association of International Education Administrators
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of American Overseas Research Centers
Council of Graduate Schools
Council of National Resource Centers for International and Area Studies (CNRC)
The Forum on Education Abroad
Joint National Committee for Languages
Latin American Studies Association
Middle East Studies Association
Modern Language Association
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Coalition for History
National Council for Languages and International Studies
National Humanities Alliance
North American Small Business International Trade Educators Association

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cc: Members and Staff of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies