

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 136
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 156
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you draft the subcommittee's fiscal year (FY) 2021 bill, we request that you include robust funding for the Title VI/Fulbright-Hays International Education and Foreign Language Studies programs under the Higher Education Act, and reject the proposed elimination of their funding in the President's Budget.

Now more than ever, we must engage internationally. Strong academic programs in critical foreign languages and intensive training in regional studies are vital to our national security. This exposure ensures a deep understanding of the socio-economic, cultural, security, and religious underpinnings of today's international conflicts. These programs are also vital to our economic success as our students prepare to compete in an increasingly global market.

Title VI and Fulbright-Hays are the federal government's most comprehensive international education programs. They play a significant role in developing a steady supply of graduates with deep expertise and high quality research on foreign languages and cultures, international markets, world regions, and global issues.

Unfortunately, due to significant funding reductions and program eliminations over the past decade, the Title VI/Fulbright-Hays educational infrastructure has suffered. This has resulted in fewer nationally recognized resource centers, undergraduate and doctoral fellowships, training opportunities for students and teachers, and outreach activities to government and business. These restrictions have undermined decades of progress at a time when the need for American capabilities and leadership for solving global challenges grows every day.

The nation's security, its economic growth, and its success in confronting global challenges hinge on our ability to engage with diverse cultures at home and around the globe. While well-documented demands for the international skills and knowledge these programs produce are growing by the day across employment sectors, our educational institutions must be better prepared to meet the challenge. A 2017 report from the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Commission on Language Learning, titled *America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century*, recommended an increase in funding for Title VI and Fulbright-Hays to support a 21st century education strategy that "promotes broad access, values international competencies, and nurtures deep expertise in world languages and cultures."

Multiple federal agencies with complementary international education programs—such as the Departments of Defense, State, and Commerce, as well as our intelligence agencies—depend on the comprehensive infrastructure and resources of Title VI/Fulbright-Hays to further their respective strategic goals. While the Department of Education works to ensure that their programs prioritize the targeted language and world regional resource needs of these agencies, the independent scholarship and diverse perspectives on world regional and international business issues these programs enable are often sought by all branches of the federal government.

As the foundation for internationalizing U.S. higher education, this federal-university partnership ensures our nation’s educational capacity and deep knowledge about all world regions, international business, and over 200 foreign languages, and at all levels of education. Without these programs, the steady supply of experts on the less commonly taught languages and world areas of strategic interest would not be replenished on a regular basis if dependent on state funding, university endowments, foundation grants or institutional support alone. Nor would there be collaborative outreach activities to K-16 educational institutions, business, government, the media, and underrepresented populations that multiply the reach of these small but effective programs.

While recent years have seen an increase in funding for Title VI/Fulbright-Hays programs, they have yet to be fully replenished since their reduction in FY 2011. We must make sure that any budget cuts are not made at the expense of strategic national interests, and strongly urge you to provide robust funding for these programs in FY 2021. At a time when our national security, economic competitiveness, and global engagement challenges demand increased linguistic, regional, and cultural competencies, investment in these world-class programs continues to be critical to America’s future.

Sincerely,



TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senator

TODD YOUNG
United States Senator

BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator

MIKE BRAUN
United States Senator

CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senator

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