

March XX, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you draft the subcommittee's fiscal year (FY) 2018 bill, we request that you include robust funding for HEA-Title VI/Fulbright-Hays International Education and Foreign Language Studies programs. We urge an investment of \$78.5 million for these programs for FY 2018, an increase of \$6.5 million above the FY 2017 Continuing Resolution level, including \$70.5 million for Title VI and \$8.0 million for Fulbright-Hays.

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.

HEA-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.

Due to the \$53.7 million or 43 percent funding reductions and program eliminations since FY 2011, the Title VI/Fulbright-Hays educational infrastructure has suffered. This reduction has resulted in 25 percent fewer nationally recognized resource centers, 18 percent fewer undergraduate and doctoral fellowships, fewer training opportunities for students and teachers, and fewer outreach activities to government and business. These reductions have undermined the progress made over the decades, and come at a time when the need for American capabilities and leadership for solving global challenges grows every day. The stakes are high—and we are already seeing the consequences.

In December 2015, the Washington Post reported that “[t]op intelligence and national security officials—including the top general of NATO—have warned that the United States’ depth of knowledge and capacity for collecting information on Russia is not up to snuff, given the stakes of the conflicts at hand and the threat an unpredictable Kremlin poses to U.S. interests.”¹ This

¹ Washington Post, “Lack of Russia Experts has some in U.S. worried,” Karoun Demirjian, December 30, 2015.

worrying example comes as no surprise. Recent reports and congressional hearings have documented the growing unmet needs for Americans with strong language skills, deep cultural knowledge and regional expertise to enhance U.S. capabilities and readiness.² A recent American Academy of Arts and Sciences report recommended increased funding for Title VI and Fulbright-Hays in order to support a 21st century education strategy that “promotes broad access, values international competencies, and nurtures deep expertise in world languages and cultures”.³ Additionally, a U.S. Department of Defense official reported in one hearing, “In FY 2011, over 81 percent (29,960) of our military positions identified as having language requirements were filled. However, only 28% (10,377) of the positions with language requirements were filled with personnel at *the required foreign language proficiency level*.”⁴ Failing to reinvest in Title VI/Fulbright-Hays today will further erode the world-class international educational and research capacity, especially in less commonly taught languages and world areas, that has been built over several decades and cannot be easily replaced once lost.

Title VI/Fulbright-Hays programs have not been replenished since their FY 2011 reduction. We must make sure that budget cuts are not at the expense of strategic national interests, and strongly urge you to provide \$78.5 million for these programs in FY 2018. 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,

Brian Schatz
U.S. Senator

Name
U.S. Senator

Name
U.S. Senator

Name
U.S. Senator

² Examples: Consultation with Federal Agencies on Areas of National Need, U.S. Department of Education, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oep/iegps/languageneeds.html> ; “2014 U.S. Business Needs for Employees with International Expertise,” <http://globalsupport.tamu.edu/Footer-Links/Resources-Center/Global-Publication/2014-US-Business-Needs-for-Employees-with-Internat.aspx>; “A National Security Crisis: Foreign Language Capabilities in the Federal Government, Committee on Homeland Security, May 21, 2012 ” <http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/subcommittees/oversight-of-government-management/hearings/a-national-security-crisis-foreign-language-capabilities-in-the-federal-government> “

³ “America’s Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century,” http://www.amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/publications/researchpapersmonographs/language/Commission-on-Language-Learning_Americas-Languages.pdf

⁴ Op.Cit., Testimony by Dr. Laura J. Junor, Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, U.S. Department of Defense, May 21, 2012, Page 3.