

COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Promoting U.S. Global Competence

September 11, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Committee Chairwoman Granger, Committee/Subcommittee Ranking Member DeLauro,
and Subcommittee Chairman Aderholt,

As the House Appropriations Committee continues its work on FY 2024 appropriations, we write with concern over reported deep reductions to the U.S. Department of Education's International Education and Foreign Language Studies account in the Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill approved by the Subcommittee before the recess. ***We strongly urge the Committee to fund this account in FY 2024 at \$85.7 million, the same amount as FY 2023 at the very least.*** The economic well-being and national security of the United States depend substantially on its citizens' ability to communicate and compete by knowing the languages and cultures of other countries. Despite the Committee's budget restrictions, this funding is crucial for our nation's prosperity and safety.

For decades, HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays have been our nation's foundational programs for international education, research, and foreign language studies, especially in the less-commonly taught languages and world areas that hold special strategic interest for our national defense and diplomatic presence around the world. In today's context, international and foreign language expertise remains of vital, heightened interest to our defense, intelligence and diplomatic communities due to increasing threats in multiple world regions. Simultaneously, our nation's economic competitiveness and response to growing security challenges in areas such as global health, environment, law enforcement, food security, cybersecurity, and more, also rely on a workforce equipped with language abilities, cultural knowledge and international experience. These capabilities are vital for effectively addressing current and future challenges.

Unfortunately, the United States lags behind other nations in the percentage of its citizens who know a second language. At the same time, our language enrollments have experienced a troubling decline. The Modern Language Association's preliminary analysis of its recent language enrollment census suggests a significant decline in language enrollments at U.S. colleges and universities since 2016, the highest decline in the history of the MLA census, which has been conducted since 1958. Data shows that the enrollment plunge correlates nearly 70% with the substantial reduction in Title VI funding in FY 2011. Urgent action is required to address this concerning trend and prioritize language education.

Through Title VI and Fulbright-Hays, the U.S. Department of Education plays a catalytic role in partnership with institutions of higher education. State and local governments, as well as the private sector, including foundations, do not consistently focus on long-term national needs for international and foreign language expertise. Moreover, other federal agencies depend on the infrastructure created by Title VI and Fulbright-Hays to further their respective strategic goals. These partnerships must be continued and strengthened.

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 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. Time is of the essence, and decisive action is needed to fortify our nation's capabilities for a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Comprehensive global and regional expertise is now more crucial than ever for our nation's well-being today and in the future. 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. To successfully engage and compete in the world, we must first understand it. The time for action is now to support these crucial programs and secure the future of our nation in an increasingly complex global environment.

Thank you for your consideration of our urgent request.

Submitted by the following 32 organizations:

African Studies Association

Alliance for International Exchange

American Association of Community Colleges

American Council of Learned Societies

ACTFL: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

American Councils for International Education

American Historical Association

American Political Science Association

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Association for Asian Studies

Association for International Business Education and Research

Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

Association of American Universities

Association of International Education Administrators

Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities

Association of Research Libraries

Consortium of Social Science Associations

Council of American Overseas Research Centers

Council of Directors of National Resource Centers

Council of Graduate Schools

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

Society of American Archivists

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cc: House Appropriations Committee and L/HHS/ED and Related Agencies Subcommittee Staff