

COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Promoting U.S. Global Competence

July 1, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
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 Chairman Cole, Committee/Subcommittee Ranking Member DeLauro, and
Subcommittee Chairman Aderholt,

As you begin work on the FY 2026 appropriations, we write with deep concern over the Administration's budget proposal to eliminate all funding for the U.S. Department of Education's International Education and Foreign Language Studies account. What's more, the Department to date has failed to allocate FY 2025 funding to these programs. **We strongly urge the Subcommittee and Committee to reject any proposal that reduces or eliminates funding for these programs. We support the \$91 million request of 89 House Members led by Rep. Deborah Ross (D-NC), including \$80 million for the Higher Education Act-Title VI, and \$11 million for Fulbright-Hays programs, a 6% increase adjusting for combined FY 2024 and FY 2025 inflation.**

We believe this request would enable continuing the process of restoring Title VI and Fulbright-Hays funding to FY 2010 levels to strengthen our country with the international expertise and global competencies critical to maintaining national security and economic leadership in our increasingly contested world. **We must make sure that any overall budget cuts are not made at the expense of strategic national interests.**

The longstanding bipartisan HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays are the 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, diplomatic presence around the world, and global economic competitiveness.

The Administration's budget claim that these programs "do not advance American interests or values" and are not a federal responsibility is mistaken. On the contrary, they contribute importantly to our nation's security and well-being.

Today, international and foreign language expertise remains of vital, heightened interest to our defense, intelligence and diplomatic communities due to increasing threats and complex challenges in multiple world regions. GAO reports in recent years have cited shortfalls of language and culture skills in several federal agencies, finding that our nation's language deficit could threaten our priorities and missions around the world.

Simultaneously, our nation's economic competitiveness, along with growing security challenges in areas such as global health, environment, law enforcement, food security, cybersecurity, engineering, financial systems, and more, also rely on a workforce equipped with language abilities, cultural knowledge and international experience. A recent national survey of 1,200 U.S. companies doing business internationally found that 96% agreed that having more international expertise on their staff would lead to increased business. Over 90% agreed that language and cross-cultural knowledge are needed by both professional and line manager staff.¹ 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 analysis of its recent language enrollment census found a significant decline in language enrollments at U.S. colleges and universities since 2016, the highest decline in the 67-year history of the MLA census. Data show 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.

Administered together, HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays are an essential federal responsibility through the U.S. Department of Education's partnership with 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 between four-year postsecondary institutions and community colleges that multiply the reach of these small but effective programs. Other federal agencies depend on the infrastructure and knowledge created by these programs to further their respective strategic goals. For example, the Department of Education's FY 2022 "Consultation with Federal Agencies on Areas of National Need" cited over 160 priority languages and all world regions.

That these programs are crucial for American interests, such as the safety and prosperity of our nation and its citizens, is not an overstatement in today's world. They represent a strategic federal investment in workforce development, innovation, and informed policymaking. Defunding these programs would deal a severe blow to the pipeline of globally competent professionals, undercutting the ability of American institutions to compete on the world stage. Thousands of

¹ Centers for International Business Education and Research, "U.S. Companies Rely on International Markets Now and in the Future" (unpublished study, 2025).

students, faculty, government agencies, and companies rely on the infrastructure these programs sustain. Now more than ever, global challenges demand globally prepared citizens—an outcome only achievable through sustained federal leadership and support.

To safeguard this capacity for times of current and future global crises, we must continuously replenish our pool of professionals with international expertise. This requires an increasing number of 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. Time is of the essence; 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 vital capacity and interdisciplinary infrastructure for addressing our escalating global challenges. The time for action is now to sustain HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays.

Please find with this letter an Information Packet including a one-page summary, examples of graduate employment, testimonials from beneficiaries, a recent survey of federal agency national needs, and results of a 2024 survey of business needs for international skills.

Thank you for your consideration of our urgent request.

Submitted by the following 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

Association for Asian Studies

Association for International Business Education and Research (AIBER)

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 National Resource Centers for International and Area Studies (CNRC)

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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 Council for Languages and International Studies

National Humanities Alliance

North American Small Business International Trade Educators Association

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ATT: HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays Information Packet

CC: Members and Staff of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies