

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 6, 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, including \$70.5 million for Title VI and \$8.0 million for Fulbright-Hays. This amount represents an increase of \$6.3 million over the FY 2016 level and \$6.5 million over the current FY 2017 Continuing Resolution.

Now more than ever, we must engage internationally. Strong academic programs in critical world languages and intensive training in regional studies are vital to our national security. Exposure to these programs ensures a deep understanding of the socio-economic, political, 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 are the foundation for ensuring a steady supply of graduates with deep expertise and high quality research on world languages and cultures, international markets, world regions, and global issues.

Due to the disproportionate \$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 fellowships, fewer training opportunities for students and teachers, and fewer outreach activities to government and business. These reductions have undermined the progress made to strengthen these programs over the last two decades, particularly following September 11, 2001, and come at a time when the need for American capabilities and leadership for solving our 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 worrying example comes as no surprise. Recent reports and congressional hearings have documented the growing unmet needs across employment sectors for Americans with strong language skills, deep cultural knowledge, and regional expertise to enhance U.S. capabilities and readiness.² 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*.”³

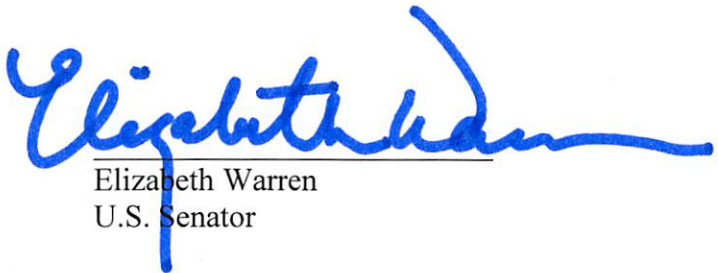
A recent American Academy of Arts and Sciences report recommended increased funding for Title VI and Fulbright-Hays in order to support a 21st century education strategy that “promotes broad access, values international competencies, and nurtures deep expertise in world languages and cultures.”⁴ Failure to reinvest in Title VI/Fulbright-Hays today will further erode our nation’s premier international educational and research capacity, especially in the over 200 less commonly taught languages and world regions of strategic interest, which cannot be easily replaced once lost.

Although representing just 0.1% of the Department of Education discretionary budget, Title VI/Fulbright-Hays programs have not been replenished since their FY 2011 reduction. We must make sure that budget cuts are not made 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



Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator

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

² Examples: Consultation with Federal Agencies on Areas of National Need, U.S. Department of Education, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/languageneeds.html>; “2014 U.S. Business Needs for Employees with International Expertise,” http://www.wm.edu/offices/revcenter/globalengagement/internationalization/papers_and_presentations/danielkediafull.pdf; “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 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.

⁴ “America’s Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century,” https://www.amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/publications/researchpapersmonographs/language/Commission-on-Language-Learning_Americas-Languages.pdf

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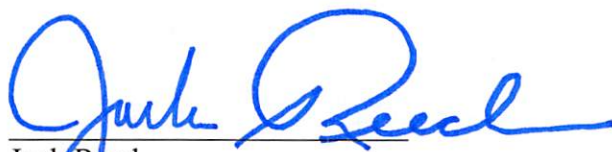

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