

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito, Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Ranking
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health, and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Capito and Ranking Member Baldwin:

As you draft the subcommittee's fiscal year (FY) 2026 bill, we request that you include robust funding for Title VI and Fulbright-Hays International Education and Foreign Language Studies programs at the Department of Education. Despite the budget restrictions, this funding is crucial for the prosperity and safety of our nation and its citizens.

The longstanding bipartisan HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs have helped our nation develop a strong foundation in international education, research, and world language studies. Strong academic programs in critical foreign languages, especially in the less-commonly taught languages, and intensive training in area and international studies hold special strategic interest for our national defense and diplomatic presence around the world. 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. In 2021, the Senate-passed *U.S. Innovation and Competition Act* included legislation to authorize and improve Title VI, and in 2022, the House-passed *COMPETES Act* included the same. Though ultimately Title VI language was not included in the final *CHIPS and Science Act*, these efforts demonstrate bipartisan support for and the importance of these programs to global competitiveness.

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.

As shortfalls of language and cultural skills continue to persist in the U.S. military, diplomatic, and intelligence communities, our nation's language deficit will threaten our priorities and missions around the globe. Simultaneously, U.S. businesses and their clientele are continuing to globalize their operations, requiring a workforce with language skills, cultural knowledge, and international experience to compete successfully in global markets. 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

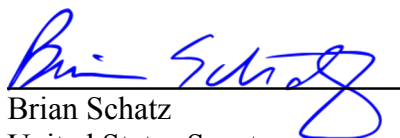
This coincides with an expanding range of sectors—including health, environment, food production, science, technology, engineering, energy, transportation, financial systems, and law enforcement—that increasingly require workers to possess international knowledge. Despite this, the U.S. continues to lag behind other nations in the percentage of citizens who know a second language. The Modern Language Association's 2021 language enrollment census found a 16.6% decline in language enrollments at U.S. colleges and universities since 2016, the highest decline since the census began in 1958. Data revealed a nearly 70% correlation between language enrollments and Title VI funding from 1998 to 2023.

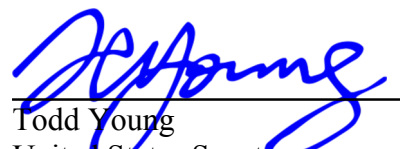
Multiple federal agencies with complementary international education programs—such as the Departments of Defense, State, and Commerce, as well as our intelligence agencies—depend on the comprehensive infrastructure and resources of Title VI/Fulbright-Hays to further their respective strategic goals. 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, four-year postsecondary institutions and community colleges, business, government, and the media, that multiply the reach of these small but effective programs.

While FY 2020 through FY 2023 have seen increases in funding for Title VI and 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 2026. 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
United States Senator


Todd Young
United States Senator

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



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Tina Smith
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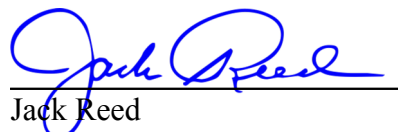
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United States Senator



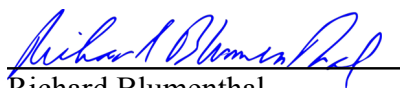
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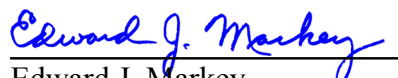
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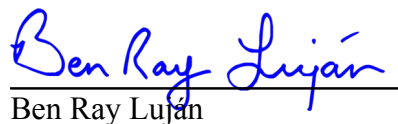
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Bernard Sanders
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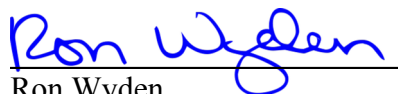
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