

# COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

*Promoting U.S. Global Competence*

September 29, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon,

We respectfully write with deep concern over the Administration's actions to eliminate all future funding for HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays (102 (b)(6)), our nation's foundational programs for International Education and Foreign Language Studies. In May 2025, the Department of Education abruptly cancelled an ongoing competition for Fulbright-Hays programs that began in October 2024. In June, the President's FY 2026 Budget Request proposed zero funding for these programs in FY 2026, stating that the programs "are inconsistent with Administration priorities and do not advance American interests or values." On September 10<sup>th</sup>, the Department informed all Title VI non-competing continuation grantees that their FY 2025 funding provided by the U.S. Congress in the FY 2025 Full-Year Continuing Resolution Act and signed by President Trump was repurposed to other unrelated programs, again without specific reason or consultation with the Congress. **These programs in fact are in the best interest of the Federal Government, significantly advance American interests and values, and contribute to U.S. global leadership.**

HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays are longstanding bipartisan 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. As such, they contribute importantly to the security and well-being of our country and its citizens.

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 cross-cultural skills in several federal agencies, finding that our nation's foreign 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.<sup>1</sup> These capabilities are vital for effectively addressing current and future challenges, and appear to be in line with the Department's workforce development and competitiveness agenda.

Administered together, HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays are an essential federal responsibility. This almost seven decade partnership with the Department has ensured our nation's educational capacity and deep knowledge about all world regions, international business, and over 200 foreign languages over time, and at all levels of education. Without these programs, the steady supply of experts on 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 indispensable to the United States and 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 will deal a severe blow to the pipeline of globally competent professionals, undercutting the ability of American institutions and our federal government to compete on the world stage. Thousands of 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.

**We strongly urge the Department to reverse this elimination, and replace it with the Congress's intended FY 2025 funding of \$85,664,000 to HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays.** Comprehensive global and regional expertise is now more crucial than ever for our nation's well-being today and in the future. Discontinuing funding undermines long-standing national security imperatives, putting America's strength and competitiveness at risk.

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. It is clear that these programs are critical to American interests.

We would be pleased to work with you and your team to continue and strengthen these programs.

**Submitted by the following organizations:**

African Studies Association

Alliance for International Exchange

American Association of Community Colleges

---

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

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 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)

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

=====

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

CC: Chris McCaghren, Acting Assistant Secretary