

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 25, 2025

The Honorable Russell T. Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
1650 17th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Director Vought and Secretary Rubio,

We write to urge you to reverse your decision to cut FY25 funding for 21 Department of State educational and cultural exchange programs including the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program, the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders (YALI), the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), and others. These programs enjoy longstanding bipartisan support in Congress and were fully funded in the final FY25 appropriations legislation and have an agreed upon FY25 spend plan with the Administration.

The educational and cultural exchange programs funded through the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs (ECA) advance U.S. national security, strengthen economic competitiveness, and reinforce democratic values—all of which are core pillars of U.S. foreign policy and essential to the Administration's foreign policy agenda. These programs are proven and cost-effective ways to strengthen U.S. global leadership and credibility, promote American values worldwide, and contribute to the safety, security, and prosperity of our country and the American people.

Quite simply, international exchanges are one of the best returns on investment spent across the entire federal budget: **90% of exchange funding is spent on Americans or inside the United States**. Additionally, U.S.-funded exchanges leverage millions more in private and international government contributions. International education is one of the United States' top exports, adding \$37.68 billion to the U.S. economy in 2021-2022, according to the Department of Commerce.

Predictable and timely release of appropriated funding is essential to ensure these programs function as intended and maintain rigorous selection processes, adequate support infrastructure, and global reach. The cancelation of these programs undermines long-standing partnerships, harms U.S. credibility and leadership abroad, and wastes taxpayer dollars.

We request that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the State Department take immediate action to release all FY25 Congressionally appropriated funds for these critical programs without further delay.

List of Programs:

- Community College Administrator Program (CCAP)
- Community College Initiative Program (CCI)
- Community Engagement Exchange (CEE, Leahy Initiative on Civil Society)
- Community Solutions Program (CSP)
- Council of American Overseas Research Centers
- English Access Scholarship Program
- English Language Fellow Program
- Global Undergraduate Exchange Program
- IDEAS Program
- Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) and YES Abroad Program
- Leaders Lead On-Demand
- Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders (YALI)
- National Clearinghouse for Disability and Exchange (NCDE)
- Professional Fellows Program
- Survey of International Educational Exchange Activity (IEEA) in the United States
- TechWomen
- The J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative
- U.S. Congress-Korea National Assembly Exchange Program
- U.S.-South Pacific Scholarship Program (USSP)
- Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Academic Fellowship
- Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Professional Fellowship Program (PFP)

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator