December 13, 2017

Chairman Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Subcommittee Members,

We are a group of associations that represent the sponsors, businesses, and industries that recruit, host, and support J-1 participants every year. We write to you today in regard to the Department of State's J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, which is currently under threat of elimination or significant reduction as a result of the Buy American, Hire American ("BAHA") Executive Order. Although J-1 programs are not directly identified in the Executive Order as an area of concern, multiple sources have reported that senior White House staff are embracing a plan to eliminate or significantly reduce the scope of the Summer Work Travel (SWT), Intern, Trainee, Camp Counselor, and Au Pair program categories. We are working with the Alliance for International Exchange – and have joined the Americans for Cultural Exchange coalition of nearly 900 host employers and associations who support J-1 exchanges – to advocate on behalf of the program.

As you know on September 7, the Senate Appropriations Committee adopted a provision in the fiscal year 2018 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill requiring a transparent process regarding potential changes to the J-1 visa programs (Sec. 7034(d)(5) in S. 1780). The amendment was offered by Mr. Coons, Mrs. Murkowski, and Mr. Leahy and included in the managers' package. The amendment requires that the administration consult with Congress prior to any modification of J-1 programs, to conduct an analysis of the impact of such modification on our public diplomacy and economy, and to engage in the full and transparent regulatory process. We support the inclusion of this provision in a final FY18 appropriations bill. This language will establish key protections for the J-1 programs at a time of high risk, and send a strong message of support from Congress to the administration.

The effects of restrictions on J-1 programs would be devastating. The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program has, for nearly 50 years, helped bring international college students to the United States to learn about American culture and meet real Americans. This results in lasting

diplomatic and national security benefits by improving the perception of the United States in the eyes of international students from more than 90 countries. Furthermore, these programs operate at virtually no cost to the U.S. taxpayer, and add significantly to the economy. In fact, a recent study by EurekaFacts shows that SWT participants alone contributed more than $500 million to the U.S. economy in 2016 via the money they spent in the country.

As associations representing industries that value the J-1 programs, we ask for your support of the Summer Work Travel, Intern, Trainee, Camp Counselor, and Au Pair programs, as well as other cultural exchange programs. We urge you to ensure that these programs are not eliminated or restricted by BAHA by working with your House colleagues to ensure inclusion of this provision in the final bill. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your staff to further discuss the importance of these programs to our country and to your constituents.

Sincerely,

The Alliance for International Exchange

American Hotel & Lodging Association

The Association of Pool and Spa Professionals

Branson Lakes Area Lodging Association

California Ski Industry Association

Colorado Hotel & Lodging Association

International Association of Amusement Park and Attractions (IAAPA)

Maine Restaurant Association

Maine Innkeepers Association

National Park Hospitality Association

National Ski Areas Association

New Jersey Business & Industry Association

Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association

Ski New Hampshire

Ski Utah

Texas Hotel & Lodging Association

U.S. Travel Association

Virginia Beach Hotel Association

Wyoming Lodging and Restaurant Association

WYSE Travel Confederation