

COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Promoting U.S. Global Competence

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
648 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

The thirty undersigned organizations applaud your continued efforts to forge a bipartisan Higher Education Act reauthorization in the 116th Congress, and deeply appreciate your longstanding support for Title VI–International Education, the nation’s foundational programs for international and foreign language education.

With this goal in mind, we urge the committee to incorporate into Title VI the amendments proposed in S. 342, the “Advancing International and Foreign Language Education Act,” a bipartisan bill reintroduced this year by Senators Todd Young (R-IN) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI). We believe these amendments strengthen federal support in ways that address the nation’s expanding 21st century needs for international and foreign language education.

Each reauthorization of the Higher Education Act finds the United States facing new global challenges. Today the nation’s security, its economic growth, and its success in navigating increasingly complex 21st century global issues, hinge on our ability to engage with diverse cultures at home and around the world. Our challenges require a far wider and deeper range of knowledge about the world, its cultures and many more of its languages, from high level expertise to a globally competent citizenry and workforce. High-level expertise continues to be of vital interest to our defense, intelligence and diplomatic communities with expanding threats in multiple world regions. At the same time, the nation’s economic competitiveness, along with new global security challenges in health, environment, law enforcement, food production, cyber security and more, increasingly rely on professional level language, cultural and regional knowledge, and experience abroad.

S. 342 addresses these findings, which are well-documented by a 2014 policy research conference, [*Internationalization of U.S. Education in the 21st Century: The Future of International and Foreign Language Studies*](#), and confirmed by the Congressionally requested 2017 [*Report of the AAAS Commission on Language Learning in the U.S.*](#) From deep expertise to a globally competent citizenry and workforce, our educational institutions must be better prepared to meet the challenges ahead.

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As the most comprehensive and multifaceted federal program in international education, we believe Title VI is the vehicle to address this 21st century human resource issue that too often is on the margins of our nation's education policy discussions. Title VI is the only federal program that supports multiple international education strategies combined with interdisciplinary programs focused on all world regions and more than 130 languages. It maintains an unparalleled national capacity in teaching and resources, without which most of the less commonly taught languages and world regions of strategic interest would not be taught in our schools and colleges on a regular basis. Other complementary international education activities in the Departments of Defense, State and Commerce, which have more targeted priorities, depend on the Title VI educational infrastructure and resources to further their strategic goals.

What's more, Title VI programs expand access to underserved institutions of higher education and populations, provide high quality programs and resources for K-12 schools, and conduct extensive outreach to government and the private sector.

In sum, the proven federal catalytic role in international and foreign language education through Title VI continues to be an essential strategy for developing—in partnership with our educational institutions—the American capabilities and leadership needed for addressing our contemporary global challenges. We urge that this role be continued, strengthened, and improved through inclusion of S. 342's amendments to Title VI, and with the bipartisan support this title has enjoyed over the decades.

We are eager to continue working with the committee to ensure the future success of Title VI, and would be pleased to provide any additional information requested. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Submitted by the following organizations:

African Studies Association
American Association of Community Colleges
American Council of Learned Societies
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
American Councils for International Education
American Historical Association
American Political Science Association
American Society for Engineering Education
Association for Asian Studies
Association for International Business Education and Research
Association of International Education Administrators
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Center for Global Education at Asia Society
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of American Overseas Research Centers
Council of Directors of National Resource Centers
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

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National Coalition for History

National Council for Languages and International Studies

National Humanities Alliance

North American Small Business International Trade Educators Association

Social Science Research Council

cc: Members of the Senate HELP Committee