



June 21, 2024

The Honorable Michael Burgess
Chairman
House Committee on Rules
H-312, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515
U.S. House of Representatives.

The Honorable James P. McGovern
Ranking Member
House Committee on Rules
H-312, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515
U.S. House of Representatives

Re: Opposition to Amendment 158, and Amendments 15, 83, and 184, to the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2025 (HR 8771)

Dear Chairman Burgess and Ranking Member McGovern:

On behalf of the Alliance for International Exchange, an association of nongovernmental organizations comprising the international educational and cultural exchange community in the United States, I write to strongly oppose Amendment 158 (submitted by Representative Mast of Florida) that seeks to eliminate funding for the Educational and Cultural Exchange programs account in the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 2025 (HR 8771). I write to also oppose amendments 15, 83, and 184, introduced by Representative Gosar of Arizona, Representative Brecheen of Oklahoma, and Representative James of Michigan, respectively, that seek to reduce funding for Educational and Cultural Exchange programs. I strongly urge the Rules Committee to oppose these amendments.

U.S. Department of State educational and cultural exchange programs are a proven and cost-effective way for the United States to remain internationally competitive, engage current and future international leaders, and promote American values worldwide. As established by the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (The Fulbright-Hays Act), exchanges are a key instrument of U.S. foreign policy and essential to strengthening U.S. global leadership, while building respect and partnerships based on shared interests around the world.

Eliminating or reducing funding for State Department exchange programs would negatively impact Americans and their communities across the country. These programs are a cost-effective investment that provides significant and immediate economic impact. **More than 90% of the Educational and Cultural Exchange programs budget is spent on Americans and in the United States**, with funds going to American organizations, businesses, and individuals who participate in exchange programs. Furthermore, international participants visiting the U.S. do business with American companies, airlines, hotels, and nongovernmental organizations in local communities.

Department of State exchanges further provide crucial opportunities for young Americans to study and research abroad, equipping them with the skills they need to succeed in today's global marketplace. Additionally, international exchanges raise the profile and prestige of U.S.

educational institutions and partners who interact with them, creating long-lasting cultural and business relationships. Exchanges play a critical role in ensuring that U.S. foreign policy delivers for Americans by including all Americans front and center through people-to-people diplomacy.

I urge the Rules Committee to oppose Amendment 158, as well as Amendments 15, 83, and 184. Exchange programs are critical to the economic, national security, and public diplomacy interests of the United States, and are one of the best returns on investment across the entire federal budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Overmann', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Overmann
Executive Director