

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We write to you in support of Department of State international exchange programs implemented by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), and in particular, the Department's BridgeUSA exchange programs (also known as J-1 private sector programs). We respectfully urge you to ensure that sufficient consular resources are in place worldwide for the timely visa processing of J-1 exchange visitors in 2026.

BridgeUSA exchange programs are critical components of American state and local economies and important tools of U.S. foreign policy. BridgeUSA exchange programs include the Au Pair, Camp Counselor, High School, Intern, Summer Work Travel (SWT), Teacher, and Trainee programs, among others. They do not rely on federal funding from the American taxpayer, as they are privately funded and receive no federal appropriations.

As we prepare for the FIFA World Cup and America's 250th birthday celebration this year, the success of the Summer Work Travel (SWT) and Camp Counselor programs will be particularly critical. Participants on these two programs support tourist destinations across the U.S. including resorts, national parks, amusement parks, boardwalk businesses, summer camps, restaurants, and other attractions in urban and rural areas alike that will be on the global stage this year. All of these will be frequented by the millions of American and international visitors anticipated to travel throughout the U.S. in 2026. Ensuring that these visitors have a positive experience will depend in no small part on the availability of seasonal staff that support our tourism and hospitality industries.

The college students participating in the Summer Work Travel program play a vital role in sustaining seasonal businesses by filling job vacancies that would otherwise go unmet. These positions support American workers, allowing main street business to profit year-round. Importantly, exchange visitors spend much of their wages in the local communities where they live and work. Without BridgeUSA programs, many seasonal and rural businesses in our states would struggle to survive.

To ensure this success, it is essential that exchange visitors receive their visas in a timely manner and are able to arrive in the United States in advance of their seasonal placements. Even short visa delays can have outsized consequences for American businesses that operate for only a few months each year and are counting on these students to help meet peak demand and provide their customers with the service they expect.

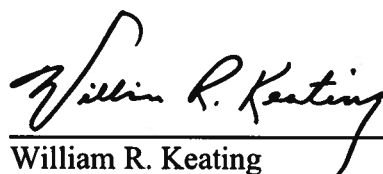
Department of State international exchange programs are a powerful public diplomacy tool and an indispensable economic asset. At a moment when the world's attention will be focused on the United States, these programs help ensure that visitors experience the best of America, from our largest cities to our smallest towns. With sufficient consular capacity in place, in the form of additional consular officers and appointment availability, the United States can both meet the extraordinary travel demand of the World Cup and reaffirm its longstanding commitment to these vital international exchange programs during this pivotal year.

Thank you for your attention and we look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,



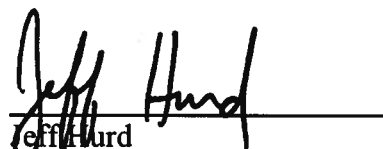
Jefferson Van Drew
Member of Congress



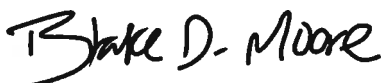
William R. Keating
Member of Congress



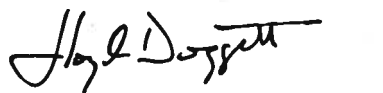
Tony Wied
Member of Congress



Jeff Hurd
Member of Congress



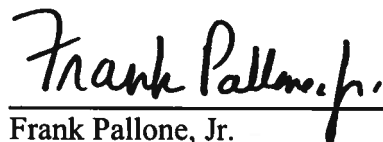
Blake D. Moore
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



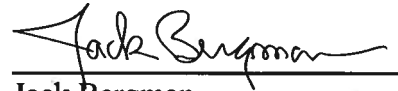
Patrick Ryan
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
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