

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 8, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

We write in support of the Department of State's J-1 Visa Summer Work Travel (SWT) program. This public diplomacy program has a long track record of success, providing an enriching exchange experience to a diverse pool of college and university students from across the globe, including from countries key to U.S. national security interests. It does so at no expense to the American taxpayer.

As you know, the SWT program awards visas to international students who wish to travel to the United States during their schools' summer breaks. The program affords these students the opportunity to experience the American way of life, American business culture, work alongside Americans, and improve their English-language skills. Through the built-in work component that places them in temporary, seasonal jobs, they can defray their living and travel expenses.

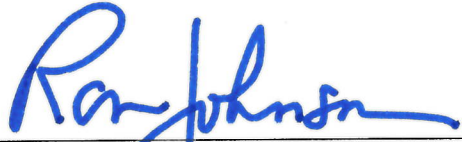
The SWT program also plays an important role for local communities across the United States. Many small businesses in our states are dependent on the program to meet their seasonal labor needs. According to a recent study commissioned by the Alliance for International Exchange, one quarter of surveyed employers state that they could not operate at capacity during peak season without SWT students to supplement their seasonal workforce.¹ For these businesses, an inability to staff all of their positions, in turn, would result in fewer hours, lower salaries, less benefits, and even job losses for their American employees. It is important to note that SWT program regulations contain provisions to ensure that exchange visitors do not displace American workers.

SWT exchange students not only work in our local businesses, they also shop in our stores, eat in our restaurants, and rent local accommodations. Their absence would have a real-world impact on local economies throughout the country.

For these reasons, as the Administration reviews all U.S. visa programs, we urge you to work with stakeholders in the SWT community to continue to strengthen this important and successful cultural exchange program that enriches and supports communities across the United States.

¹ Jorge Restrepo, ET AL., *Review of Summer Work Travel Program: Program Effects and Economic Impact*, ALL. FOR INT'L EXCH. (June 12, 2017), http://www.alliance-exchange.org/sites/default/files/SWTReportExecSum_EurekaFacts_20170612.pdf.

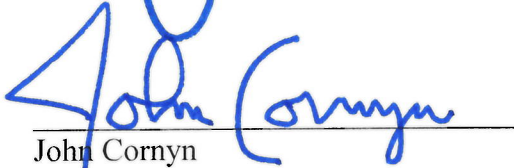
Sincerely,



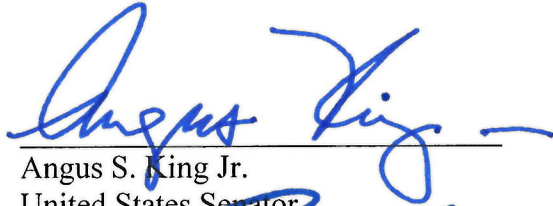
Ron Johnson
United States Senator



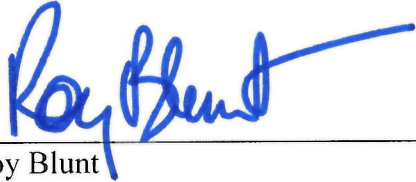
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator




Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator




Roy Blunt
United States Senator



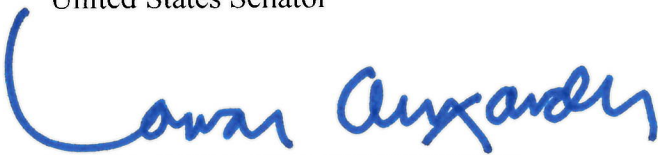
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator




Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Lamar Alexander
United States Senator



Benjamin Cardin
United States Senator




Susan Collins
United States Senator



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