



September 25, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are a group of associations that represent the sponsors, businesses, and industries that recruit, host, and support J-1 participants every year. We are writing to urge you to defend privately funded exchange programs against potential elimination or significant changes under the Buy American, Hire American ("BAHA") Executive Order.

The Executive Order does not directly identify J-1 visa programs as an area of concern. Multiple sources, however, are reporting that senior White House staff are embracing a plan to eliminate or significantly cut a number of programs, including Summer Work Travel, Intern/Trainee, Camp Counselor, Au Pair, and potentially others.

If adopted, the Executive Order implementation would have a disastrous impact on the travel and tourism industry. Privately funded J-1 exchange programs cost U.S. taxpayers virtually nothing. What they add to our country, however, is significant. These programs bring the world's best and brightest to the U.S., where they engage personally with American citizens and communities and help meet seasonal workforce needs.

The effects of the BAHA restrictions could be devastating. In fact, a recent study by EurekaFacts shows that many of the businesses we represent could not operate without the Summer Work Travel (SWT) program. Roughly half of the employers represented in the study reported that without the SWT program they would have to reduce hours of operation, and over one quarter said they would be unlikely to be able to stay open for the full season, thus impacting American employees. That same study found that SWT is neither the cause of, nor associated with unemployment in the United States. Instead, J-1 programs serve to facilitate cultural exchange and support businesses in tourist areas that are facing labor shortages. Furthermore, SWT participants contributed more than \$500 million to the U.S. economy in 2016 via the money they spent in the country, at an average of \$5300 per participant.

Summer camps, which by necessity are largely in rural areas with small year-round populations, would be similarly impacted without J-1 Camp Counselors. The program exposes young American campers to cultures from around the world, and allows camps to stay open longer and serve more campers. J-1 interns and trainees gain valuable professional experience and strengthen international business relationships. Finally, the J-1 Au Pair program supports working families and provides strong ties between Americans and young people from foreign countries.

As you know, the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program enjoys broad bi-partisan support. In fact, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved an amendment on September 7 designed to protect these programs from potential changes except through the formal rulemaking process. The legislation also requires consultation with the Appropriations

Committees in both chambers and an analysis of the impact on our public diplomacy and economy from such changes before they are made.

An impact analysis is particularly important because the elimination of these programs would devastate seasonal communities and small businesses across the U.S. We ask that you ensure J-1 programs are not included as part of the BAHA implementation. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Alliance for International Exchange

National Ski Areas Association

Alaska Hotel & Lodging Association

New Jersey Business & Industry Association

American Hotel & Lodging Association

North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association

Association of Pool and Spa Professionals

Ocean City (MD) Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association

Branson Lakes Area Lodging Association

Ohio Travel Association

California Hotel & Lodging Association

Pacific Northwest Ski Areas Association

California Ski Industry Association

Ski New Hampshire

International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)

Ski Utah

Maine Innkeepers Association

Texas Hotel & Lodging Association

Maine Restaurant Association

U.S. Travel Association

Massachusetts Hotel & Lodging Association

Virginia Beach Hotel Association

Michigan Lodging & Tourism Association

West Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association

Minnesota Lodging Association

Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association

Minnesota Resort and Campground Association

World Waterpark Association

Montana Hotel and Lodging Association

Wyoming Lodging & Restaurant Association

National Park Hospitality Association

WYSE Travel Confederation