

BridgeUSA Coalition

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

Congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of State. As sponsors, host employers, and associations that represent the Department of State's **BridgeUSA Exchange Program** (formerly the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program), we look forward to working with you and your team.

We are heartened by your recent comments to State Department employees during which you highlighted how people-to-people exchanges, "bring our world closer together and convey the best of America to the world, especially its young people."

We urge you to work with President Biden to ensure that Presidential Proclamation 10052, "Proclamation Suspending Entry of Aliens Who Present a Risk to the U.S. Labor Market Following the Coronavirus Outbreak" is rescinded as soon as possible.

The BridgeUSA programs advance American economic growth and national security, and enhance peace in our world through their engagement with young people. BridgeUSA programs:

- Stimulate more than \$1.2 billion in American economic activity, support jobs for Americans in nearly every state and in many sectors of the U.S. economy, and as au pairs provide crucial childcare to more than 17,000 American families. These include the families of medical personnel supporting America's COVID response and hundreds of military families who could not continue their military service without the support of these programs
- Advance U.S. national interests by enhancing mutual understanding between the U.S. and people from other countries. As shown in a 2017 study by EurekaFacts, more than 75% of Summer Work Travel (SWT) exchange visitors return to their home countries with a more positive opinion of the United States, and more than 90% would recommend the program to their peers.
- Operate at virtually no cost to the American taxpayer, support American jobs, and contribute \$5,700 per participant to local economies, more than a half-billion dollars nationally according to EurekaFacts.

The pandemic and Presidential Proclamation 10052 have greatly impacted BridgeUSA programs. The 2020 Summer Work Travel Program from May – September comprised 93% fewer participants than 2019 levels. The same was true across the other exchange visitor categories forcing many sponsors to reduce staffing by 60% or greater amounting to a devastating loss of program administration knowledge if the 2021 season is further delayed under the shadow of the proclamation. When

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Proclamation 10052 is rescinded, the process of restoring confidence in these critical public diplomacy programs can begin again.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. We are happy to work with the Department to answer any questions or discuss this in more detail with your staff.

Please contact Christine La Monica-Lunn (President and CEO / InterExchange) at clamonica-lunn@interexchange.org; or, James Pellow, Ed.D., (President and CEO/ CIEE) at jpellow@ciee.org to schedule a convenient date and time to discuss our support for your BridgeUSA agenda.

Very Sincerely,

Alliance Abroad Group, Texas

Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce, Maine

Big Sky Chamber of Commerce, Montana

Block Island Chamber of Commerce, Rhode Island

Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce & CVB, Missouri

Branson Lakes Area Lodging Association, Missouri

Brewster Chamber of Commerce, Inc., Massachusetts

CampCareUSA, California

Cape Cod Canal Region Chamber of Commerce, Massachusetts

Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, Massachusetts

CCUSA/Camp Counselors USA, Inc., California

Chatham Chamber of Commerce & Merchants Association, Massachusetts

Cody County Chamber of Commerce, Wyoming

Colorado Ski Country USA

Cook County Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota

Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), Maine

Cultural Exchange Network (Cenet), Missouri

Cultural Homestay International (CHI), California

Dynamic Global Exchange, Michigan

Eastham Chamber of Commerce, Massachusetts

GeoVisions, Texas

Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, Maryland

Greenheart International, Illinois

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Hampton Area Chamber of Commerce, New Hampshire

Harwich Chamber of Commerce, Massachusetts

Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, South Carolina

HospitalityMaine

Idaho Ski Areas Association

IENA: International Exchange of North America, New Jersey

InterExchange, Inc., New York

International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)

Intrax, Inc., California

Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, Wyoming

JCC Association of North America

Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB, New York

Mackinac Island Tourism, Michigan

Martha's Vineyard Chamber of Commerce, Massachusetts

Michigan Snowsports Industries Association

Midwest Ski Areas Association

Montana Ski Areas Association

Mt Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau, New Hampshire

Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, South Carolina

Myrtle Beach Area Hospitality Association, South Carolina

National Parks Hospitality Association

National Ski Areas Association

Ocean City Maryland Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Association

Ogunquit Chamber of Commerce, Maine

Orleans Chamber of Commerce, Massachusetts

Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce, North Carolina

Outer Banks Visitors Bureau, North Carolina

Pacific Northwest Ski Areas Association

Park City Chamber of Commerce, Utah

Pennsylvania Ski Areas Association

Provincetown Chamber of Commerce, Massachusetts

Pool and Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA), Virginia

Sedona Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau, Arizona

Ski Areas of New York

Ski California

Ski Maine

Ski & Snowboard Minnesota

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Ski New Hampshire

Vermont Ski Areas Association

Ski Utah

Visit Big Sky, Montana

Ski Wisconsin

West Virginia Ski Areas Association

Spirit Cultural Exchange, Illinois

Whitefish Chamber of Commerce, Montana

Southeast Ski Areas Association

Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce,
Massachusetts

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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