



The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520
United States of America

RE: The future of the United States J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

1 September 2017

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

We write in support of the U.S. Department of State's J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program and Summer Work Travel (SWT) Program. The Programs are exemplary in its service to international relations, but also as a vehicle for person-to-person diplomacy. We firmly believe that the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program has value for visitors, American citizens, and international trade relations alike.

Young people are full of ideas, plans and hopes for the future, but usually limited by a modest income. This has remained true since the dawn of student travel as a method to foster international understanding throughout post-war Europe. Despite the modest means of youth, travellers aged 15 to 29 today account for 23% of international (tourism) arrivals each year – more than 284 million travellers and \$283 billion in international tourism receipts in 2016.

As the global association representing the youth, student, and educational travel industry, the World Youth Student and Educational (WYSE) Travel Confederation commends the Department for its long-time commitment to the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program and the international cultural exchange that it has facilitated since the 1960s. The SWT Program in particular has long been known by youth and student travel professionals across the globe as a cornerstone programme of cultural exchange for youth and students wishing to experience American culture. The Department should be proud of the welcome it has extended to hundreds of thousands of foreign youth each year. These youth have relished the opportunity to combine travel with the opportunity to expand their horizons by learning about a new culture, conversing in a second language, building career skills, and developing new friendships.

WYSE Travel Confederation and its 600+ members are dedicated to promoting and developing educational travel opportunities for young people and do so in 120+ countries, including the United States. WYSE member companies are leaders in travel programmes, products, and services tailored specifically to the needs of young people. Our members, which include U.S. sponsors and international agents who facilitate the SWT, have grave concerns regarding the "Buy American, Hire American" executive order as this development would seem to suggest that the elimination of the J-1 Exchange Visitors Program is under consideration.

WYSE Travel Confederation and its members believe that eliminating the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program represents a significant and unnecessary barrier to international youth mobility. Eliminating the J-1 Exchange Visitors Program would not only close your door to foreign youth; it would close the door for American youth.

Lastly, it would be remiss to ignore the economic contribution that foreign youth visitors make to the United States economy as camp counselors, students interns, au pairs, or seasonal employees at hotels, resorts, and iconic tourist attractions of the United States. We fully appreciate the need to Make America Great Again by empowering its citizens through economic opportunities. We also fully understand through our work with other governments that foreign visitors permitted to work temporarily in a destination are often perceived as a threat to domestic jobs. However, our research consistently suggests that visitor expenditure on products and services in a destination actually contributes to jobs and ultimately benefits local citizens – even when those visitors are young with a limited income.

We sincerely hope that you see the multi-faceted value of international youth mobility.

On behalf of WYSE Travel Confederation, I urge you to support the possibility for young people to pursue paths that combine the necessary international cultural exchange and education that lead to global knowledge, skill, and citizenship. Preserving the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is surely one way that you can do this.

Yours sincerely,



David Chapman
Director General
WYSE Travel Confederation