

April 29, 2021

Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
H-405, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Calvert,

As you draft your Fiscal Year 2022 Department of Defense Appropriations bill, we request that you include \$15 million in funding for the **World Language Advancement and Readiness Grant program**.

The future national security and economic well-being of the United States will depend substantially on our military and intelligence communities' abilities to communicate and compete by knowing the languages and cultures of other countries. Unfortunately, the United States lags in the percentage of its citizens who learn a second language as compared to other nations. Currently, only 21% of America's high school students study a second language, leaving our nation with an inadequate pool of potential recruits for mission-critical language positions.

Multiple Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports cite the shortfalls of language and culture skills in the U.S. military and intelligence communities, concluding that our nation's language deficit could threaten our priorities and missions around the globe.^{1,2} Further, the Commission on Language Learning of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences released a report in February 2017, at Congress' request, which notes that "by several measures, the United States has neglected languages in its educational curricula, its international strategies, and its domestic policies."³

Established in the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the **World Language Advancement and Readiness Grants program** supports high-quality world language programming in our nation's elementary and secondary schools. The program provides three-year competitive grants to support the establishment, improvement, or expansion of world language learning in Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools and local education agencies with Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) programs.

¹ "DOD Needs a Strategic Plan and Better Inventory and Requirements Data to Guide Development of Language Skills and Regional Proficiency," 2009. GAO. URL: <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09568.pdf>

² "Opportunities Exist to Improve Visibility and Sustainment of Knowledge and Skills in Army and Marine Corps General Purpose Forces," 2011. GAO. URL: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/590/585990.pdf>

³ "America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century," The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2017. URL: https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/academy/multimedia/pdfs/publications/researchpapersmonographs/language/Commission-on-Language-Learning_Americas-Languages.pdf

DoDEA schools and school districts with JROTC programs are uniquely positioned to reach children who are likely to join the military or work for our intelligence communities. Importantly, seventy-five percent of the grant funding is reserved for languages deemed critical by the Secretary of Defense. We are pleased that the Department is currently accepting grant applications for Fiscal Year 2021 and we must continue providing robust support to sustain this critical program.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge inclusion of **\$15 million for the World Language Advancement and Readiness Grants program** in the FY 2022 Department of Defense Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Rep. David Price
Member of Congress

Rep. Don Young
Member of Congress