May 10, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Every year American students graduate high school without the necessary language and cultural training to meet the demands of an increasingly interconnected world. The lack of linguistically proficient and culturally competent students poses a threat to our national security, economic prosperity, and social well-being. In March, the Council on Foreign Relations published a report authored by Condoleezza Rice and Joel Klein that found, “The lack of language skills and civic and global awareness among American citizens increasingly jeopardizes their ability to interact with local and global peers or participate meaningfully in business, diplomatic, and military situations. The United States is not producing enough foreign-language speakers to staff important posts in the U.S. Foreign Service, the intelligence community, and American companies.”

Despite critical security and economic needs, we have failed to adequately support language programs that start in the early grades and create a continuity of best-in-class language instruction through college. As Michelle Obama said at the launch of the “100,000 Strong” Initiative, “Getting ahead in today’s workplaces isn’t just about the skills you bring from the classroom. It’s also about the experience you have with the world beyond our borders -- with people, and languages, and cultures that are very different from our own.”

Already, programs across the federal government are building the human capital that businesses and government agencies need to operate in an interconnected world, but we need to do more. The security and future of our country depend on accurately understanding other cultures through their linguistic and cultural practices.

Given the national security and economic imperative of language learning, we urge you to address the need for all American students, from primary through graduate school, to gain proficiency in a second language and prioritize the following programs in your Fiscal Year 2014 budget.

- **Language Flagships (Department of Defense/Defense Language National Security Education Office)**: Language Flagships is a national model for designing and implementing best-in-class language programs at the K-12, college, and graduate levels.

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Language Flagships funds centers of intensive language instruction at universities across the country and K-16 language programs that offer pathways to superior proficiency starting in the early grades.

For example, the University of Oregon partners with the Portland Public Schools to offer rigorous content and language instruction beginning in the early grades and continuing through an articulated language pathway. This partnership produces students with superior proficiency who become significant assets to our national security and economic competitiveness. Yet, more are needed. We ask that you also support funding for centers in additional languages such as French, Spanish, and German, which will further increase our national security capacity as well as fully fund the other language programs of the DoD.

- **STARTALK (ODNI):** STARTALK, created under the George W. Bush National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), runs high-quality K-16 summer programs for language teachers and students in 48 states and the District of Columbia. STARTALK's goal is to provide innovative language instruction, train world-class language teachers, facilitate 21st century curriculum development, and create high-quality assessments. The programs are outcomes-driven, standards-based, and learner-centered and help build the language skills our country desperately needs. In order to more widely disseminate these best-practices, we ask that you support STARTALK providing technical assistance and professional development year-round.

- **National Security Language Initiative for Youth and the Critical Language Scholarships (CLS) Program (Department of State):** The National Security Language Initiative for Youth, or NSLI-Y, provides merit-based scholarships to students in grades 9-12 to learn critical need languages through overseas summer and academic-year immersion programs. The program seeks to train a cohort of Americans with high-level linguistic and cultural competencies and to foster an interest in other languages and cultures among program participants. The CLS Program, which provides group-based intensive language instruction and cultural enrichment experiences for seven to ten weeks, is part of a US government effort to expand dramatically the number of Americans studying and mastering foreign languages.

- **International and Foreign Language Education Programs under Title VI of the Higher Education Act and Fulbright-Hays (Department of Education):** Title VI of the Higher Education Act (HEA) authorizes ten domestic programs to strengthen American higher education in foreign languages and international studies. Fulbright-Hays supports four complementary overseas programs to improve teaching and research of other cultures and languages, training of specialists, and the American public’s understanding of peoples of other countries. For over 50 years, these programs have strengthened our knowledge of all world areas and helped students gain expertise in over 200 foreign languages.
The programs described above begin to address the language crisis in our country, but more needs to be done. In order to create a national priority on language learning the federal government must articulate the imperative for multilingual graduates, identify and promote best-in-class approaches to language learning, and support the development and scaling of high-quality language programs, starting in elementary school. **We encourage you to prioritize American security, American students as global citizens, and American economic interests by supporting these programs in your FY 2014 budget.**

Sincerely,

**National Organizations**

American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI)  Chinese Language Association of Secondary Elementary School (CLASS)

American Classical League (ACL)  Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA)

American Councils for International Education (ACTR/ACCELS)  JNCL-NCLIS (Joint National Committee for Languages/National Council of Languages and International Studies)

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)  Linguistic Society of America (LSA)

American Council on the Teaching of Russian (ACTR/ACCELS)  Modern Language Association (MLA)

American Association of Teachers of German (AATG)  National Association of District Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NADSFL)

American Association of Teachers of French (AATF)  National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL)

American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP)  National Committee for Latin and Greek (NCLG)

American Philological Association (APA)  National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL)

American Translators Association (ATA)
## Regional Organizations

- Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CSCTFL)
- Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL)
- Pacific Northwest Council for Languages (PNCFL)
- Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT)
- South West Conference of Language Teaching (SWCOLT)
- New England Chinese Language Teachers Association (NECLTA)

## State Organizations

- Arizona Language Association (AZLA)
- Arkansas Foreign Language Teachers Association (AFLTA)
- California Language Teachers Association (CLTA)
- Connecticut Council of Language Teachers (CT COLT)
- Colorado Congress of Foreign Language Teachers (CCFLT)
- Confederation in Oregon for Language Teaching (COFLT)
- Foreign Language Association of Georgia (FLAG)
- Foreign Language Association of Missouri (FLAM)
- Foreign Language Association of North Carolina (FLANC)
- Foreign Language Association of Virginia (FLAVA)
- Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey (FLENJ)
- Florida Foreign Language Association (FFLA)
- Greater Washington Association of Teachers of Foreign Languages (GWATFL)
- Hawaii Association of Language Teachers (HALT)
- Illinois Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ICTFL)
- Indiana Foreign Language Teachers Assn (IFLTA)
- Kentucky World Language Association (KWLA)
- Maryland Foreign Language Association (MFLA)
- Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA)
- Michigan World Language Assn. (MIWLA)
- Minnesota Advocates for Immersion Network (MAIN)
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cc: Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta  
Secretary of Education Arne Duncan  
Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Acting OMB Director Jeffrey Zients  
Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper