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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**H. R.** \_\_\_\_\_

To ensure that significantly more students graduate college with the international knowledge and experience essential for success in today's global economy through the establishment of the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program in the Department of State.

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. SCHNEIDER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the  
Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**A BILL**

To ensure that significantly more students graduate college with the international knowledge and experience essential for success in today's global economy through the establishment of the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program in the Department of State.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the "Senator Paul Simon  
5       Study Abroad Program Act of 2026".

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress makes the following findings:

3 (1) To prepare students for success in the mod-  
4 ern global economy, opportunities for study abroad  
5 should be included as part of a well-rounded edu-  
6 cation.

7 (2) Study abroad programs provide students  
8 with unparalleled access to international knowledge,  
9 an unmatched opportunity to learn world languages,  
10 and a unique environment for developing cultural  
11 understanding, all of which are knowledge and skills  
12 needed in today's global economy.

13 (3) Only 10 percent of United States college  
14 students study abroad before they graduate, leaving  
15 90 percent of graduates entering the workforce with-  
16 out the global skills, knowledge, and experiences af-  
17 forded by study abroad programs that will position  
18 them for success in the global economy. Minority  
19 students, first-generation college students, commu-  
20 nity college students, and students with disabilities  
21 are also significantly underrepresented in study  
22 abroad participation.

23 (4) Congress authorized the establishment of  
24 the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study  
25 Abroad Fellowship Program (referred to in this sec-  
26 tion as the "Lincoln Commission") under section

1       104 of the Miscellaneous Appropriations and Offsets  
2       Act, 2004 (division H of Public Law 108–199). Pur-  
3       suant to its mandate, the Lincoln Commission sub-  
4       mitted a report to Congress and to the President  
5       containing its recommendations for greatly expand-  
6       ing the opportunity for students at institutions of  
7       higher education in the United States to study  
8       abroad, with special emphasis on studying in devel-  
9       oping nations.

10           (5) According to the Lincoln Commission,  
11       “[e]xperience shows that leadership from adminis-  
12       trators and faculty will drive the number of study  
13       abroad participants higher and improve the quality  
14       of programs. Such leadership is the only way that  
15       study abroad will become an integral part of the un-  
16       dergraduate experience.” A competitive grant pro-  
17       gram is necessary to encourage and support such  
18       leadership.

19           (6) Student health, safety, and security while  
20       studying abroad is, and must continue to be, a pri-  
21       ority for institutions of higher education and study  
22       abroad programs.

23           (7) According to Open Doors 2022, published  
24       by the Institute of International Education in part-  
25       nership with the Department of State, study abroad

1 participation at colleges and universities in the  
2 United States plummeted by 91 percent during the  
3 2020-2021 academic year. While study abroad num-  
4 bers have rebounded, according to Open Doors  
5 2025, participation remains 14 percent below pre-  
6 pandemic levels. In today's global society, increasing  
7 access to study abroad for students at institutions of  
8 higher education across the United States is critical  
9 to ensuring that those students gain the skills,  
10 knowledge, and experiences necessary to maintain  
11 the leadership and security of the United States in  
12 tackling global challenges that affect the people of  
13 the United States and succeeding in a global econ-  
14 omy.

15 **SEC. 3. PURPOSES.**

16 The purposes of this Act are—

17 (1) to ensure that significantly more students  
18 have access to quality study abroad opportunities,  
19 especially among low-income students and students  
20 of color;

21 (2) to ensure that the diversity of students  
22 studying abroad reflects the diversity of students  
23 and institutions of higher education in the United  
24 States;

1           (3) to encourage greater diversity in study  
2           abroad destinations by increasing the portion of  
3           study abroad that takes place in nontraditional  
4           study abroad destinations, especially in developing  
5           countries; and

6           (4) to encourage a greater commitment by  
7           United States institutions of higher education to ex-  
8           pand study abroad opportunities.

9 **SEC. 4. SENATOR PAUL SIMON STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM.**

10       (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

11           (1) CONSORTIUM.—The term “consortium”  
12       means a group that—

13           (A) includes at least 1 institution of higher  
14       education; and

15           (B) may include nongovernmental organi-  
16       zations that provide and promote study abroad  
17       opportunities for students.

18           (2) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The  
19       term “institution of higher education” has the  
20       meaning given such term in section 101(a) of the  
21       Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)).

22           (3) NONTRADITIONAL STUDY ABROAD DESTINA-  
23       TION.—The term “nontraditional study abroad des-  
24       tination” means a location that is determined by the

1 Secretary of State to be a less common destination  
2 for students who study abroad.

3 (4) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means  
4 the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program, as  
5 renamed pursuant to subsection (b)(1)(A).

6 (5) STUDENT.—The term “student” means—

7 (A) an alien lawfully admitted for perma-  
8 nent residence in the United States or a na-  
9 tional of the United States or (as such terms  
10 are defined in paragraphs (20) and (22) of sec-  
11 tion 101(a) of the Immigration and Nationality  
12 Act of 1965 (8 U.S.C. 1101(a))) who is en-  
13 rolled at an institution of higher education lo-  
14 cated within the United States; or

15 (B) an individual who is an eligible noncit-  
16 izen for Federal student aid, as determined by  
17 the Secretary of Education for purposes of the  
18 Federal student loan program under title IV of  
19 the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.  
20 1070 et seq.).

21 (6) STUDY ABROAD.—The term “study abroad”  
22 means an educational program of study, work, serv-  
23 ice learning, research, internship, or combination of  
24 such activities that—

1 (A) is conducted outside of the United  
2 States; and

3 (B) carries academic credit.

4 (7) WORLD LANGUAGE.—The term “world lan-  
5 guage” means any natural language other than  
6 English, including—

7 (A) languages determined by the Secretary  
8 of State to be critical to the national security  
9 interests of the United States;

10 (B) classical languages;

11 (C) American sign language; and

12 (D) Native American languages.

13 (b) SENATOR PAUL SIMON STUDY ABROAD PRO-  
14 GRAM.—

15 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Subject to the avail-  
16 ability of appropriations and under the authority of  
17 the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act  
18 of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2451 et seq.), the Secretary of  
19 State shall—

20 (A) rename the IDEAS Program, or any  
21 successor program, as the “Senator Paul Simon  
22 Study Abroad Program”; and

23 (B) enhance the Program in accordance  
24 with this section.

1           (2) OBJECTIONS.—The objectives of the Pro-  
2           gram are that not later than 10 years after the date  
3           of enactment of this Act—

4                   (A) not fewer than 1,000,000 under-  
5           graduate students from the United States will  
6           study abroad annually;

7                   (B) the demographics of study abroad par-  
8           ticipation will reflect the demographics of the  
9           United States undergraduate population by in-  
10          creasing the participation rate of underrep-  
11          resented groups; and

12                   (C) an increasing portion of study abroad  
13          will take place in nontraditional study abroad  
14          destinations, with a substantial portion of such  
15          increases in developing countries.

16           (3) COMPETITIVE GRANTS TO INSTITUTIONS OF  
17          HIGHER EDUCATION.—

18                   (A) IN GENERAL.—In order to accomplish  
19          the objectives described in paragraph (2), the  
20          Secretary of State shall award grants, on a  
21          competitive basis, to institutions of higher edu-  
22          cation, either individually or as part of a con-  
23          sortium, based on applications by such institu-  
24          tions that—

1 (i) set forth detailed plans for using  
2 grant funds to further such objectives;

3 (ii) include an institutional commit-  
4 ment to expanding access to study abroad;

5 (iii) include plans for evaluating  
6 progress made in increasing access to  
7 study abroad;

8 (iv) describe how increases in study  
9 abroad participation achieved through the  
10 grant will be sustained in subsequent  
11 years; and

12 (v) demonstrate that the study abroad  
13 programs have established health, safety,  
14 and security guidelines and procedures, in-  
15 formed by Department of State travel  
16 advisories and other appropriate Federal  
17 agencies and resources, including the Over-  
18 seas Security Advisory Council and the  
19 Centers for Disease Control and Preven-  
20 tion.

21 (B) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under  
22 subparagraph (A), the Secretary may give pri-  
23 ority to—

1 (i) minority-serving institutions listed  
2 under section 371(a) of the Higher Edu-  
3 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a));

4 (ii) eligible institutions (as defined in  
5 section 312(b) of the Higher Education  
6 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1058(b)) that  
7 qualify for the Strengthening Institutions  
8 Program of the Department of Education;  
9 and

10 (iii) institutions that offer study  
11 abroad programs with a significant world  
12 language learning component, as applica-  
13 ble.

14 (4) IMPLEMENTATION OF LINCOLN COMMISSION  
15 RECOMMENDATIONS.—In administering the Pro-  
16 gram, the Secretary of State shall take fully into ac-  
17 count the recommendations of the Lincoln Commis-  
18 sion, including—

19 (A) institutions of higher education apply-  
20 ing for grants described in paragraph (3) shall  
21 use Program funds to support direct student  
22 costs;

23 (B) diversity shall be a defining char-  
24 acteristic of the Program; and

1           (C) quality control shall be a defining  
2           characteristic of the Program.

3           (5) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out this sub-  
4           section, the Secretary of State shall consult with  
5           representatives of diverse institutions of higher edu-  
6           cation and educational policy organizations and  
7           other individuals with appropriate expertise.

8           (c) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than December 31  
9           of each year, the Secretary of State shall submit an annual  
10          report to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Sen-  
11          ate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House  
12          of Representatives that details the implementation of the  
13          Program during the most recently concluded fiscal year.

14          (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATION.—There are  
15          authorized to be appropriated, for fiscal year 2027 and  
16          for each subsequent fiscal year, such sums as may be nec-  
17          essary to carry out the Program.