

Opening Statement– Joint Hearing Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight and the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness

Rep. Rubén Hinojosa

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I would like to thank Chairman Delahunt for calling today's joint hearing on "Restoring America's Leadership through Scholarships for Undergraduates from Developing Countries: The Uniting Students in America Proposal." International exchange of scholars enriches and strengthens our nation. The Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight and the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness share an interest and responsibility for expanding opportunities for international education for visiting scholars here and for our students abroad.

Our system of higher education is world renowned. It has been a magnet for the top academic talent from all corners of the globe. International education is a \$15 billion per year industry that has kept the United States on the cutting edge of research and innovation.

The benefits of the global exchange of ideas on our college campuses are in our national interest – our economic interest and our national security interest. Recent surveys have shown that there is an urgent need to improve America's image abroad. One of the most potent tools and long-lasting strategies to achieve this goal is to ensure that our institutions of higher learning remain open to the best and brightest from around the world.

According to the Institute of International Education over 60 percent of all international students personally finance their education. 26 percent are supported by U.S. colleges and universities, and only 0.6 percent are supported by the U.S. government. Given the return on investment in terms of U.S. relationships abroad and the enrichment of the educational experience for all students in U.S. institutions of higher education, we should consider ways to increase our support for international education.

In our nation, we also believe that education is a great equalizer. What is compelling about Chairman Delahunt's proposal is that instead of facilitating opportunities for the well-to-do or well-connected from around the world, it reaches to the grassroots level and would create a cadre of U.S. educated individuals from struggling communities. This investment in human capital could have the power to transform those communities, improving the quality for those who live there and deepening ties to the United States.

I also appreciate that the chairman has recognized the special role that Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving Institutions, and other minority-serving institutions can play in this effort. These campuses have a great deal of experience in supporting low-income students. They also have a great interest in providing international educational opportunities to their students. In the reauthorization of the

Higher Education Act, we have worked to make sure that our international programs in title VI are more accessible to minority-serving institutions. I appreciate the chairman's commitment to making sure that these institutions will be able to participate in the USA scholars initiative. This is a win-win for the international students and for our institutions.

We have examples of success in providing U.S. educational opportunities to economically disadvantaged students from other countries. In Texas, we have made a regional commitment to affordable higher education on both sides of the border as you will hear in the testimony from Dr. Clay of the University of Texas Pan American. Raising the level of educational attainment on both sides of the border is essential to support the economic development and growth of the region.

The USAID-funded Cooperative Association of States for Scholarship program administered by Georgetown University's Center for Intercultural Education and Development is another example. Over the past 20 years, this program has provided scholarships and training to over 5,500 students from poor, rural areas of Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. These scholars have returned home to be leaders in economic development, education, health care, and other high need areas. For those who worry that low-income scholarship recipients will just remain in the U.S., the CASS program offers powerful evidence that this will not be the case. 99 percent of the CASS scholars returned to their home country.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to insert into the record written testimony from Dr. Chantal Santelices, the director of the Center for Intercultural Educational and Development.

In closing, I would like to welcome the witnesses and thank them for joining us today. I believe that Chairman Delahunt's proposal has promise and am eager to hear your views and recommendations. I look forward to continuing to work with the chairman to further develop this proposal.

Thank you and I yield back.