

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
United States Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As our ally Taiwan, and other Indo-Pacific countries face growing threats from authoritarian regimes, especially the People's Republic of China (PRC), it is imperative that the U.S. bolster ties with Taiwan and demonstrate our resolve to remain engaged with it and across the region. To that end, in December 2022, President Biden signed into law the *Taiwan Fellowship Act*, a bill that mandates the creation of the historic Taiwan Fellowship Program. Through this program, U.S. government employees from a broad range of agencies related to economic and security issues will have the opportunity to go to work in Taiwan, deepening ties between Washington and Taipei, thereby playing a critical role in building our country's next generation of foreign affairs professionals. However, more than a year after the legislation's enactment, and in violation of statutory deadlines, the *Taiwan Fellowship Act's* mandate remains unfulfilled. We urge the U.S. Department of State to swiftly finalize an agreement with Taiwan to stand up the fellowship program to allow its first fellows to arrive in Taiwan by the end of this year.

On December 23, 2022, President Biden signed into law the *James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23).¹ Included was the *Taiwan Fellowship Act*, modeled on the widely respected Mansfield Fellowship Program.² Established in 1994 and named after former U.S. ambassador to Japan and Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield, the Mansfield Fellowship Program set the gold standard for professional development and international exchange programs for federal employees. In the same way Mansfield fellows are immersed in Japanese culture and government, the Taiwan Fellowship Program will give select U.S. government employees unique opportunities to become true experts on Taiwan. In their first year, fellows will learn Mandarin Chinese; in their second year, they will work in a Taiwanese government agency or parliamentary office.

Section 5530 of the FY23 NDAA, requires within 30 days of its enactment, the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), in consultation with the Department of State, to have (1) begun "negotiations with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office, or with another appropriate entity, for the purpose of entering into an agreement to facilitate the placement of

¹ James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub L. No. 117-263, 136 Stat. 295 (2022).

² *Mike Mansfield Fellowship Program*, <https://mansfieldfellows.org/>.

fellows in an agency of Taiwan” and (2) begun “the process of selecting an implementing partner.”³ We are concerned that these deadlines have not been met.

Getting the Taiwan Fellowship program up and running is increasingly important as the authoritarian forces of the PRC, North Korea, and Russia continue to threaten the Indo-Pacific region, including Taiwan. Taiwan is a vibrant democracy and a critical U.S. ally that shares our commitment to human rights, the rule of law, and security across the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. Despite facing threats of foreign interference in its most recent presidential and legislative elections, attempts to hinder participation in international fora, and near-daily gray-zone violations of its airspace and maritime boundaries, Taiwan continues to be a good-faith stakeholder in the international community and a beacon of democracy.⁴

The Taiwanese government is currently in the midst of a transition between administrations, but outgoing President Tsai Ing-wen, and her administration as well as incoming President-elect Lai Ching-te, have expressed support for the Taiwan Fellowship Program. As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs opined positively following enactment of the *Taiwan Fellowship Act*, it is “expected to create opportunities for US officials to study and receive training in Taiwan in order to better understand Taiwan and forge friendships with Taiwanese government officials and members of various sectors, paving the way for stronger bilateral strategic partnerships.”⁵ Accordingly, We urge the State Department and AIT to continue to engage counterparts in Taiwan’s National Development Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office to promptly sign a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding or exchange of notes establishing the program as soon as practicable, but no later than a date by which the first fellows may arrive in Taiwan by the end of this year.

To help us better understand the reasons for delay in implementing the fellowship program and how the State Department intends to proceed, please respond to the following questions in writing by May 23, 2024:

1. Will the State Department and AIT launch the Taiwan Fellowship Program in 2024, with the first fellows arriving before year’s end? If so, please provide the State Department’s plan and timeline for achieving these goals. Please include in your response the steps that

³ Taiwan Fellowship Act, 22 U.S.C. § 3384.

⁴ Naiyu Kuo & Jennifer Staats, *Taiwan’s Democracy Prevailed Despite China’s Election Interference*, United States Institute of Peace (Jan. 24, 2024), <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/01/taiwans-democracy-prevailed-despite-chinas-election-interference>; Jude Blanchette, Ryan Hass & Lily McElwee, *Building International Support for Taiwan*, Center for Strategic & International Studies (Feb. 13, 2024), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/building-international-support-taiwan>; Ben Lewis, *China’s Recent ADIZ Violations Have Changed the Status in the Taiwan Strait*, Council on Foreign Relations (Feb. 10, 2024), <https://www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-recent-adiz-violations-have-changed-status-quo-taiwan-strait>; Yimou Lee & Fabian Hamacher, *‘Turn around immediately’: Taiwan warns off Chinese coast guard boats again as tensions simmer*, Reuters (Mar. 16, 2024), <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/turn-around-immediately-taiwan-warns-off-chinese-coast-guard-boats-again-2024-03-16/>.

⁵ *US National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 and Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2023*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan) (Dec. 28, 2022), https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1328&s=99391; Kuan-Ting Chen & Lauren O’Connell, *The Taiwan Policy Act: More Than Just Defense Ties*, The Diplomat (Nov. 4, 2022), <https://thediplomat.com/2022/11/the-taiwan-policy-act-more-than-just-defense-ties/>.

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken

May 15, 2024

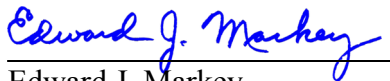
Page 3

the State Department and AIT have already taken to conclude a bilateral exchange of notes or Memorandum of Understanding. If not, why not?

2. Did the State Department meet the 30-day deadline under Section 5530 of the FY23 NDAA to begin negotiations for fellowship placement and the selection of an implementation partner? If not, why not? What progress has the State Department made in its negotiations and in selecting an implementing partner?

The Taiwan Fellowship Program is a tangible manifestation of a principled foreign policy committed both to supporting a key democratic partner and building a generation of American foreign affairs professionals with needed expertise on Taiwan. We hope that we will soon see the launch of the Taiwan Fellowship Program so that the first class of U.S. fellows may arrive in Taiwan before the end of 2024 to begin their language study.

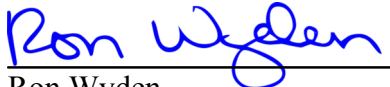
Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



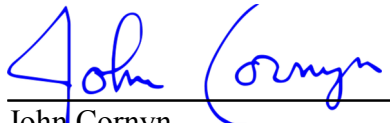
Marco Rubio
United States Senator



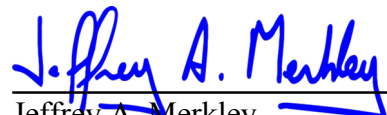
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator




John Cornyn
United States Senator

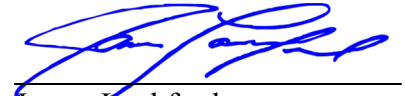


Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

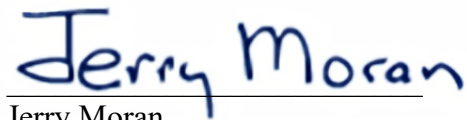
The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
May 15, 2024
Page 4




Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Kurt M. Campbell
Deputy Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Daniel J. Kritenbrink
Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Ms. Laura Rosenberger
Chair of the Board of Trustees
American Institute in Taiwan
Suite 750
1300 17th Street North
Arlington, Virginia 22209