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August 7, 2020

The Honorable Michael Pack
Chief Executive Officer
U.S. Agency for Global Media
330 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20237

Dear Mr. Pack:

I write to express my concern about reports that you may not renew the J-1 visas of foreign journalists employed by public international broadcasters overseen by the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM). I urge you in the strongest terms to approve these renewals.

The USAGM and its grantees employ foreign journalists to carry out the agency's mission to "inform, engage and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy." Foreign journalists are essential to this mission, bringing critical language skills and invaluable firsthand insights from around the world. Media organizations supported by the USAGM have made it clear that they rely on J-1 visas to recruit and retain these talented journalists and believe strongly that doing so furthers our country's position as a global leader in press freedom.

I am therefore very concerned to read media reports which indicate that you may not seek to renew J-1 visas for foreign journalists and that the USAGM is conducting a case-by-case review of J-1 renewal applications for foreign journalists and other foreign employees. Losing these journalists would undermine the USAGM's ability to promote the same democratic values abroad that Americans enjoy here at home. In addition, failure to renew these visas would put many of these journalists at great risk, forcing them to travel during a pandemic and, in some cases, sending them back to countries with a track record of hostility toward journalists.

To understand why the USAGM may not seek to extend the J-1 visas of foreign journalists and other foreign employees under its purview, please answer the following questions by August 31, 2020:

1. Is the USAGM conducting a case-by-case review of J-1 visa renewal applications? If so, has the USAGM ever conducted a similar review in its history?
2. How many foreign journalists and foreign national employees does the USAGM employ on J-1 visas?
3. Will you commit to provide a determination for every J-1 visa application before foreign nationals lose their current visa status?
4. Has the USAGM declined to seek renewal of J-1 visas for any foreign journalists this year? If so, how many and what was the reason for declining the application?

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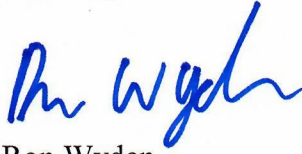
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5. Are you aware that the President's recent executive order to suspend new J-1 visas does not apply to foreign nationals who are already lawfully present in the United States?

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ron Wyden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ron" and last name "Wyden" clearly distinguishable.

Ron Wyden
United States Senator