

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

The Honorable Linda Thomas-Greenfield
United States Ambassador to the United Nations
Address

Dear Mr. Secretary and Madam Ambassador,

On February 18, 2021, Congressman Joaquin Castro (TX-20), Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Development, International Organizations, and Global Corporate Social Impact, reintroduced the Department of State Student Internship Program Act. On March 3, 2021, Senators Cory Booker (NJ) and Tim Scott (SC), introduced the companion bill in the Senate.

This bipartisan piece of legislation requires the State Department to compensate its interns and authorizes the Department to provide housing and travel for individuals who are interning far from their place of residence. It creates more equitable opportunities in foreign policy, which are accessible to young people of all backgrounds, allowing for a more diverse pipeline of American diplomats.

Yet unpaid internships persist in the United Nations (UN) Secretariat, where America is one of the highest contributing countries.

A new session of the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly, which discusses the administrative and budgetary issues of the Organization, is scheduled for March 2021 to discuss the situation of unpaid interns at the United Nations. On this occasion, we invite you to support the recommendations of the **Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system**, which has formally recommended the UN Secretary-General to launch a reform of the internship program, including a report exploring various funding avenues to compensate interns.

Unpaid internships create barriers to access for young people from low-income backgrounds— often people of color—who cannot afford to take on the financial burden of travel, temporary relocation overseas, or work without pay.

Diplomacy needs the best and brightest for the work of the future. As the Department of State Student Internship Program Act demonstrates, paid internships open the door to life-changing opportunities without regard to economic means. Dedicated stipends for interns at the UN will provide the opportunity for many young, talented individuals to experience the work of diplomacy and consider it as a future profession. In addition, our country will have a more diverse pipeline of American diplomats, well-prepared to represent our interests abroad.

We respectfully request that you fully support this reform of the internship program in the UN Secretariat as well as in other UN agencies and programs.

We look forward to your response regarding your current stance on the issue. Thank you for your consideration of our viewpoint on this matter.

Carlos Vera
Co-founder & Executive Director
Pay Our Interns