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Mr. President, Ms. Vice President, Members of the DC State Board of Education, it is an honor and a pleasure to be here today to talk to you about the importance of ensuring that more Americans have the opportunity to study in China and what the Obama administration is doing to expand those opportunities for underrepresented groups, including Washington, DC, public school students.

Let me start by saying how impressed I am with the young people who have spoken here this evening. They represent how learning a new language and crossing cultural boundaries can be a life-transforming experience. These young people have bright futures ahead of them. Whether they pursue a career that involves China in some way or not, their experience in China has clearly sent them in new, positive directions.

I also want to thank Sally Schwartz, who has been a terrific advocate for ensuring that DC public school students gain the global knowledge that is so critical in today's economy. As the Obama administration thinks about how to expand study opportunities in China at the high school as well as college and graduate levels, I am fortunate that Sally already has the great ideas, proven track record and the growing infrastructure at CGEL to make our shared goal a reality.

By way of background, I am currently senior advisor to the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia & the Pacific, as well as the director of the 100,000 Strong Initiative, which I will discuss here today. My background is in U.S.-China relations, and I have worked both in the government and the private sector over the past 15+ years. As a Washington, DC, native and the mother of two DCPS students, I care deeply about the DC public school system. Growing up, my parents sent me to all private schools, but I made a different choice for my own kids who currently attend Janney Elementary and will continue onto Deal where, as you know, there is an excellent IB program and where Chinese is taught. I want these sorts of opportunities not only for my kids, but also for DC students across the city.

Let me now give you some background on what we are calling the 100,000 Strong Initiative, and then talk briefly about why I think it is so important to connect this national effort to the DC school system.

Last year, President Obama announced his goal of seeing 100,000 Americans study in China over the next four years. The rationale is simple: China is now the second largest economy in the world, and a major world power with global reach. Effectively addressing virtually any transnational challenge – from nuclear non-proliferation to economic recovery to climate change – will require the United States and China to work

together. In addition, in order to stay economically competitive, Americans will need to understand the global economy of the 21st century in which China plays a central role.

That means that knowing something about China is no longer an elective for American leaders, but rather a prerequisite. So too must it be a prerequisite for our next generation of leaders: today's students.

Yet Americans know relatively little about China. According to the 2010 Open Doors report, released in November by the Institute for International Education, only about 13,500 U.S. college students studied in China between 2008 and 2009. For high school students, who are not tracked by Open Doors, we have seen estimates of about 1,000. That same report showed almost 130,000 Chinese students enrolled in American universities, meaning that ten times more Chinese students come to the United States for educational programs than Americans who study in China. While we welcome Chinese students to our world-class schools, we must also ensure that our students can pursue the same opportunities in China.

The contrast is even more pronounced when it comes to language study. English language study is a component of China's national curriculum. As a result, according to Chinese official media, over 300 million Chinese were studying English in 2006 – nearly a quarter of the country's population. This is 600 times more than the number of Americans who study Chinese language; according to the Modern Language Association, approximately 50,000 Americans are learning Mandarin.

This imbalance in knowledge and first-hand experience can put Americans at a disadvantage. To address that imbalance, the 100,000 Strong Initiative seeks to prepare the next generation of American experts on China who will be charged with managing the growing political, economic, and cultural ties between the U.S. and China. We also seek to identify specific opportunities and funding sources for underrepresented students to study in China so that a broader cross-section of Americans can gain a deeper understanding of China, and will be better equipped to engage in the global economy.

Americans who typically take advantage of study abroad programs have historically been a remarkably homogenous group. A typical profile for an American study abroad student is female, Caucasian, middle or upper class, and enrolled in a four-year college or university. This is the same for those who choose to study in China. Community colleges, middle and high school students, African-American and Hispanic students, and students from lower economic backgrounds are greatly underrepresented in study abroad programs, particularly in those to China. Community colleges, for example, enroll almost half of all undergraduate students in the United States, yet less than three percent of those who study abroad come from community colleges.

This means that a large number of our students are missing out on opportunities to increase their international literacy and gain critical life skills that could expand their academic and professional options in the future. Moreover, it is these underrepresented students who could most benefit from study abroad programs. A recent study by the

Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI) found that students who study abroad have improved academic performance upon returning home, higher graduation rates, and graduate within a shorter time period. This study focused on college students, but there is also evidence that high school students who engage in some form of study abroad graduate at higher rates and are better prepared for college and the workplace.

That is why we are working closely with community colleges and minority-serving institutions across the country, and we hope to be able to announce some specific initiatives targeting those underrepresented groups over the next month or so. With regard to underrepresented groups on the post-secondary level in DC, we have been in contact with Howard University, a historically black college, and are reaching out to the University of the District of Columbia and the Community College of DC as well.

In addition, we must develop a pipeline of students who are interested in learning Mandarin and learning about China. That must start in K-12. I applaud the growing number of public and public-charter elementary, middle and high schools that are currently offering Chinese; I hope more schools will follow their lead. DC high school students should take advantage of existing study-in-China programs.

Let me mention a few of the existing programs before moving on to new ones that we hope to encourage.

The U.S. Government, with the support of Congress, funds several scholarship programs to sponsor studies in China, including the Fulbright U.S. Student and Scholar Programs, Benjamin Gilman International Scholarship Program, Critical Language Scholarships for Intensive Summer Institutes, David L. Boren Scholarships, and the Language Flagship program. All these excellent programs support the shared goal of expanding access to international knowledge and skills, and some – such as the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (or NSLI-Y) -- are specifically targeted at high school students.

The Chinese government has already committed 10,000 Bridge Scholarships for American students to study in China, in support of the 100,000 Strong Initiative. The Bridge program, which is being run through U.S.-based Confucius Institutes – of which there are two in the DC area, at the University of Maryland College Park and at George Mason in Virginia – include scholarships for 800 high school students every year to participate in “Bridge Summer Camp”, a multi-week language and cultural immersion summer program in China. I encourage DC students to research and apply to these U.S. and Chinese government programs.

These are terrific programs, but they aren't intended to meet all of the growing need and growing demand. The U.S. Government sends more American students to China through its programs than to any other country in the world, but this is still only a fraction of the total number of U.S. students who study abroad with the support of parents, schools, local communities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. So our task is to promote more of these opportunities – and help them be more financially accessible.

The 100,000 Strong Initiative will be funded by the private sector and implemented by non-governmental organizations. The State Department will act as champion for study-in-China programs as well as matchmaker between those programs and private donors.

It is in this capacity that, almost immediately after starting at the State Department in September, I contacted the Chancellor's office and indicated my desire to work with the DC school system to develop a pilot project for DC students. I also reached out to Sally Schwartz, whom I have known for a few years.

As you have heard, through CGEL, Sally has helped a limited number of DC students to study in China in recent years. CGEL has the capacity to scale up in a big way, and we are committed to supporting that effort. Specifically, Sally has developed a strong proposal for DC, and we are now working together to identify potential sources of funding for CGEL. I am confident CGEL can develop a strong DC-focused program that enables many hundreds of local public school students to study in China. Can you imagine the impact that could have on our kids, our schools, and our local economy?

In addition, we hope to also identify opportunities for educators and administrators to experience China first-hand. This will help DC school leaders and policy makers develop the curricular enhancements for DC schools that will be critical to ensuring that students' China experience has a sustained impact on their lives and those of their classmates.

I want to mention that we are encouraging the development, by a private entity, of a robust China alumni network that will be available to students for free to maintain connections to China that will facilitate social, academic and professional networking.

Finally, I hope that the State Board of Education will seriously examine ways in which to integrate global education and language into curricular reform. Global education does not need to come at the expense of math, science and reading. Our kids deserve the opportunity to develop all these skills; moreover, they will need them in the 21st century workplace and we do them a disservice – and put them at a disadvantage – if we do not fully equip them. CGEL and its expert network have the capacity to help provide a roadmap for how DCPS could implement a robust Chinese-language program, and I encourage the Board to work with CGEL on this important effort.

Working together under the umbrella of the Obama administration's 100,000 Strong Initiative, we can have exponential impact. The initiative will provide opportunities for Americans to understand better a country that is at once one of the oldest and most important world civilizations and a major modern power. It will benefit U.S.-China strategic and economic relations over the long term. Most importantly, it will have lasting impact on American students and improve their readiness for continued education, work and leadership -- and therefore enhance our shared future.

Thank you very much for your time.