October 11, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

As leaders of 109 affiliate groups of National Peace Corps Association, representing more than 50,000 individuals from across our nation, we respectfully request that you submit a modest but meaningful funding increase for the Peace Corps in your fiscal year 2020 submission to Congress.

This past March, your excellent nominee to lead the Peace Corps, Dr. Josephine "Jody" K. Olsen, was sworn in as the agency's 20th director. As a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV), former Peace Corps Country Director, Deputy Director and (for a brief period) Acting Director of the agency, Dr. Olsen has a keen understanding of Peace Corps programming and service from all perspectives.

Since 1961, the Peace Corps has demonstrated the greatness of the American spirit to people in more than 141 nations. Currently, 7,300 volunteers serve in over 60 countries, but the Peace Corps has the potential to do far more. The number of citizens who want to serve our nation far exceeds available positions. Meanwhile, requests for volunteers from nations in need exceeds current capacity.

As Congress is poised to appropriate level funding for the Peace Corps in FY 2019, this would mark the fourth consecutive year Peace Corps funding would remain at $410 million. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the $410 million approved for Peace Corps in FY 2016 is the equivalent of $434 million in today's dollars. Because of this decline in purchasing power, the agency faces a difficult choice of reducing the number of volunteer opportunities or reducing important staffing, training or services that support volunteers in the field.

At the same time, we must do more to honor Peace Corps service by supporting disabled RPCVs whose short-term (and occasionally permanent) disability was caused during their
service to our nation. This year, the Congressional Budget Office estimated a modest increase in disability payments for these individuals might cost $1 - $2 million annually. As retiring Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX) said earlier this year on the House floor, "When (Peace Corps Volunteers) return from service with injuries and sickness, volunteers should be able to make ends meet with disability payment that they receive which is not the case now. I hope to see these provisions in law some day."

Mr. President, you have the opportunity to become a champion of the Peace Corps, by proposing funding that would allow many more additional Americans to serve, and by providing much-needed, long-awaited support for the most vulnerable members of the RPCV community injured or otherwise disabled during their service to our country.

Thank you for considering this request. We will look forward to learning of your Peace Corps directives to Congress in the coming months.

Sincerely,

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Founding Member
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