March 3, 2020

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Leahy,

The decades-long congressional support of the Peace Corps affirms the agency’s role as a respected component of U.S. global engagement and diplomacy in 142 countries since 1961. As Peace Corps' 60th anniversary approaches, we respectfully request that you appropriate robust funding for this vital agency in Fiscal Year 2021.

The Peace Corps is an iconic and vibrant part of the American identity. It offers life-changing service opportunities to thousands of Americans every year; these volunteers collaborate on grassroots development projects and promote cultural understanding in 61 nations. Similar to members of our military and diplomatic corps, Peace Corps Volunteers take an oath to serve our country, and do so often in remote, challenging environments.

The inspiring work of Peace Corps Volunteers encompasses many sectors of development. Last year, 2,400 volunteers in a dozen countries worked in youth development projects, benefitting more than 170,000 young people with training programs and activities to assist them in becoming healthy and engaged citizens. Hundreds of Peace Corps Volunteers across Africa continue to be on the front lines in the battle to eradicate malaria, organizing community-based education campaigns about prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. In the Republic of Georgia, a Peace Corps community development Volunteer collaborated with a local organization to create a computer-training center where socially vulnerable populations could get free computer classes to increase their employability.

Additionally, American ideals of democracy, pluralism and individual rights are spread by the Peace Corps volunteers themselves. They are immersed in their host communities by speaking the same language, eating the same food, enduring the same hardships, and celebrating the same joys.

Public support for Peace Corps remains strong, and its programs continue to renew and expand, with plans to return this year to Kenya, begin a first-time program in Montenegro, and return to the Solomon Islands in 2021.
However, funding for Peace Corps has remained stagnant for many years. The Peace Corps manages to sustain robust programs and services in the face of deteriorating purchasing power, though additional resources would strengthen overall programs, increase opportunities for service, and improve the morale of staff and Volunteers. Thank you for considering our request and for your ongoing support of the Peace Corps.

Sincerely,

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Susan Collins
United States Senator

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Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator