March 16, 2018

Chairman Hal Rogers
Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations and Related Programs
Room HT-2, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Nita Lowey
Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations and Related Programs
1016 Longworth
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

Thank you for your commitment to the Peace Corps. Because of your efforts, the agency is poised for even greater impact at a time when the unique role of the Peace Corps is urgently needed. To ensure the agency has the resources it needs to further its mission, we respectfully ask that you appropriate $410 million for the Peace Corps in Fiscal Year 2019.

The 21st Century Peace Corps is more critical to America’s role in the world than ever before. Today, approximately 7,000 Volunteers serve in 64 countries to train, elevate, and inspire the next generation of global leaders. A Volunteer may teach entrepreneurship and business management to women in Nicaragua, combat the spread and stigmatization of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, or organize after-school opportunities for youth in Ukraine. They also are key implementing partners at the grassroots level for the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy, and the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI).

In recent years the agency’s greater focus on monitoring and evaluation efforts and objective, data-driven leadership decisions have strengthened Volunteer effectiveness. The agency also has taken steps to improve Volunteer health, safety, and security through data-driven initiatives in the field such as Healthy Volunteer 2020 and MySafety Guide and by taking an active role in helping Congress craft legislation and implement needed reforms such as the Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response (SARR) program. We remain confident that agency leadership is committed to supporting and preparing Volunteers to complete their service safely and successfully.

Volunteers are more than just technical advisers; they are the face of America abroad. Immersed in the local language and culture, posted at the furthest reaches of the world, and trusted by local decision-makers and institutions, the Peace Corps’ grassroots diplomacy is not only cost-efficient and unequaled, it is urgently needed. America’s military leaders agree. In February 2017, 121
retired three and four-star generals and admirals wrote to Congress, “…Peace Corps and other development agencies are critical to preventing conflict and reducing the need to put our men and women in uniform in harm’s way.” Within America’s soft power arsenal, there simply is no other institution that more effectively manifests the American idea to the world than the Peace Corps.

The agency now bases most recruiters at the community level and has extended its presence to well over 100 colleges and universities through the Campus Ambassador, Peace Corps Prep, and Paul D. Coverdell Fellows programs. This proactive, cost-efficient approach has enabled, the agency to field highly-qualified Volunteers from all corners of the country. Yet supply and demand for Peace Corps continues to far exceed funding. In fiscal year 2017, over 22,500 Americans applied for just over 3,400 opportunities, and host countries continue to request thousands more Volunteers. Retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal has called this gap between applicants and service opportunities “democratic energy wasted and a generation of patriotism needlessly squandered.”

We thank you for your efforts to provide Peace Corps with the resources it needs to fuel the next generation of American leadership, and we respectfully ask that you make this $410 million investment in the agency for fiscal year 2019.

Sincerely,

JOHN GARAMENDI  
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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FILEMON VELA  
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