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The Next Step in Changing the World

January 19, 2022
SB 050 – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

As President and CEO of the non-governmental, non-profit National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), I write to urge your support for passage of Senate Bill 050 (and House companion Bill 087).

If approved and signed into law, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) would be treated the same as military personnel, Americorps volunteers, and others who are exempt from the residency requirement upon returning to Maryland and seeking in-state tuition to further their education.

This common sense fix to the residency requirement is long overdue. It is obvious that RPCVs could not have resided in Maryland as their service to our nation involves living and working overseas.

Since 1961, more than 6,500 Maryland residents have been among the nearly quarter million individuals who have served our nation as Peace Corps Volunteers, working to advance peace, friendship, understanding, and collaborative assistance in 142 foreign countries.

After serving for two (or in some cases, three) years overseas, RPCVs come home with a variety of skills and experiences that benefit our state and the communities where they reside. We are proud that the spirit of service to others remains a lifelong commitment for a vast majority of Peace Corps community members.

For many, Peace Corps service results in a change in an RPCVs career path. A 2011 survey of the Peace Corps community found that at that time, a large number of volunteers who had served in the 2000s entered the fields of education and teaching, health care, and/or nonprofit work following their service. For these individuals, that likely meant additional education and training.

Peace Corps service is a financial sacrifice. Volunteers are paid for their work while in service, but paid at a rate commensurate to that received by host country nationals. This results in most if not all of their income while in service being used to cover everyday expenses.

The Peace Corps does provide volunteers with a “readjustment” allowance, a payment that accumulates each month and is set aside for volunteers at the end of their service. Recent volunteers' readjustment pay amounted to roughly \$8,000. However, having been away from home for more than two years, these funds are needed for RPCVs to reestablish themselves as they prepare for the next step in their career path. This allowance is needed and used to cover everything from rent, transportation, health care and food, to new clothing, laptops, and cell phones. Additionally, many younger RPCVs also need to resume repayment of student loans.

For these reasons and more, I join other members of the Maryland Peace Corps community in thanking you for your service to our state, and to respectfully ask you to make sure that Senate Bill 050 is reported favorably out of committee and approved by the Senate.

Sincerely,



Glenn Blumhorst – President and CEO
National Peace Corps Association
Guatemala 1988-1991
(resident of Silver Spring MD)

References:

- Peace Corps website – Fast Facts: https://www.peacecorps.gov/news/fast-facts/?_ga=2.4451573.776781958.1642106557-169851260.1642106557
- Peace Corps website – FY 2022 Congressional Budget Justification: https://files.peacecorps.gov/documents/open-government/peacecorps_cbj_2022.pdf
- *A Call to Peace - Perspectives of Volunteers on the Peace Corps at 50* (A report by Civic Enterprises and the National Peace Corps Association in partnership with Peter D. Hart Research Associates)

Appendix:

(The following are comments from members of the Maryland Peace Corps community in support of this legislation, collected during a 24 hour period from January 13 – 14)

It has been a privilege to work with Returning Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) in the State of Maryland at UMBC's Shriver Center. Sargent Shriver, our Center's namesake was a born and raised as a proud Marylander and Maryland has a special place in the Peace Corps community. It is one of the top 5 per capita Peace Corps Volunteer producing states, and top 10 in actual number of volunteers (259 in 2019) with nearly 7000 having served since 1961. We support SB 050 and HB 087 first because it will make a targeted and important difference in tuition cost for a small number of Maryland RPCVs who find themselves without a recognized resident status. We also support this bill because on a larger level it signals the State of Maryland's symbolic recognition of the valuable national service contributions of all RPCVs. Finally, correcting this residency gap provides an opportunity for our state to sound a broader "Welcome to Maryland" invitation to RPCVs, inviting them to come home for grad school, and then perhaps to settle in for careers and lives that make a difference in our communities.

Joby Taylor
Gabon 1991-1993
Director, Shriver Peaceworker Fellows Program at UMBC

Charlotte Keniston
Guatemala 2008-2011
Associate Director, Shriver Peaceworker Fellows Program at UMBC

As a returned volunteer and former overseas staff member, I have personally witnessed the selfless dedication of literally hundreds of Peace Corps Volunteers. They serve under the most difficult of circumstances, far from home and all its familiarity and creature comforts. The lessons they learn are many. As a result, some of the most selective universities in the US consistently make room for students with a Peace Corps background. Maryland should join them and do all that it can to capture as many of these returning volunteers. This is both to enhance the educational environment with a global perspective and to attract these same people to come live and work in Maryland. They will enrich their classrooms and they will enrich Maryland. The very least we can do is to offer them in-state tuition. This small concession will return to our state many times the "investment" of waived out of state tuition. Please vote to approve Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087.

William C Piatt
Togo 1974-1978; Togo staff 1982-1986; Czech Republic/Slovakia staff 1993-1996
Edgewater, MD 20137

Please give Marylanders the same rights as others in the nation. Education is important and should be available to those who have served the nation abroad, whether it is the military or the Peace Corps.

Jamar Winder
Perú, 2007-2009
US Army veteran 2011-2021
Lexington Park, Maryland 20653

As a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, I know firsthand the value of the Peace Corps experience, not only to me personally, but to the communities and institutions of which I have since been a part. I urge you to recognize the value of Peace Corps service to those Maryland citizens who have served and returned home to Maryland by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087, which would afford them the privilege of in-state tuition, despite their having lived out of the state during the two years of their service.

Sandra Lauffer
Malawi 1966-1967
Prince Frederick, MD 20678

Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) serve our nation abroad and domestically and return to the U.S. with experiences and skills that benefit our communities, classrooms, federal workforce, and help advance international development. Please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Please make sure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation. Please make Maryland an example of support for public service.

Corina L. Niner
Republic of Azerbaijan 2011-2013
Fort Washington, MD 20744

Peace Corps Volunteers are servants to our nation, bringing back experiences and skills that benefit MD University classrooms as their lived experience benefits all learners. Please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Please make sure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same, as others who serve our nation, by helping them benefit from the lower cost of in-state tuition fees to help lower the burden of high education costs.

Teena Curry
Madagascar, 2010-2013
Hyattsville, MD 20784

A returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV), I graduated from a Maryland high school and have lived mostly in Montgomery County since my 1968 return from Peace Corps/Peru (currently, 39 years in Glen Echo, MD). I have been an active volunteer in Maryland for many decades, e.g., an elected municipal councilmember, president of a Bethesda condominium, a graduate of Leadership Montgomery, a Board member of a local fire department, etc., using skills of community development honed in the Peace Corps. Voting in favor of Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087 will enhance our population with trained, experienced, committed (and bilingual) RPCVs who will stay in and contribute to Maryland, having pursued their educational goals here, paying in-state tuition.

Gloria Levin
Peru 1966-1968
Glen Echo, MD 20812

As a Maryland resident and a returned Peace Corps Volunteer ('85-'88 Sierra Leone), I urge you to support Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087 which will permit Maryland residents who join the Peace Corps (leaving the US to serve in a developing country for at least two years) upon their return to Maryland to be considered state residents who are eligible for in-state tuition.

This legislation would both encourage residents (especially young people) to engage in public service, and remove a substantial disincentive for choosing Peace Corps service or other international volunteer activities.

Mike Kelleher
Sierra Leone 1985-1988
Chevy Chase MD 20815

As a U.S. diplomat having represented our government overseas, I can personally attest to the value and sacrifice Peace Corps Volunteers provide on behalf of our country. They are some of the most well known, best understood, and impactful representatives of the United States among the poor communities and countries around the world. Further, Peace Corps Volunteers bring back experience, skill, and a volunteer spirit that benefits Maryland's communities and classrooms. Please show your support for this great service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Please make sure Marylanders who serve the U.S. in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation.

Jed Meline
Micronesia 1990-1992
Bethesda, MD 20817

We urge passage of House Bill 087 and Senate Bill 050. We are Maryland residents since 1973 and can bear witness to how Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) have contributed to the state (and the nation) in many ways. We believe Peace Corps service should be treated equally with service in the military. Thank you very much.

Fran Irwin, Afghanistan 1964-1967
Will Irwin, Afghanistan 1966-1967
Bethesda, MD 20817

Peace Corps Volunteers dedicate 2+ years of their life to service abroad - however, our service to our nation is not recognized when we come home and are refused resident status for Maryland public universities in a state we spent our whole lives in. Please show your support for Maryland Returned Peace Corps Volunteers by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087 and make sure that we are supported equally as others who serve our nation.

Michele Naideck
Cambodia 2017-2019
Rockville, MD 20850

Peace Corps volunteers have a dual role, bringing America and their skills to a specific place in a developing country, and bringing their experiences back to the USA to expand international understanding among Americans. Many go on to university after their service and the university they choose benefits from their experience. Increasing the possibilities for Volunteers from Maryland going to Maryland universities with in-state tuition keeps this experience in the state. Please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087.

Eric Schweitzer
Ghana 1967-1969
Potomac, MD 20854

Peace Corps Volunteers serve our nation with distinction, and bring back experiences and skills that benefit our communities and our classrooms. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers have also volunteered to help in the COVID-19 response nationally. As a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, I urge you to please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Please make sure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation.

Laurette Cucuzza
Solomon Islands 1994-1997
Rockville, MD 20877

Peace Corps Volunteers serve our nation with distinction, and bring back experiences and skills that benefit our communities and our classrooms. It's a no-brainer that we want Marylanders to bring that experience back to serve and enrich our diverse state. Please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087 to ensure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation.

Leah Quin
Mali 2002-2004
Silver Spring, MD 20901

As a Maryland resident and a returned Peace Corps Volunteer, I urge you to support Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087 which will permit Maryland residents who join the Peace Corps (leaving the US to serve overseas for at least two years) to maintain their eligibility for in-state tuition as state residents upon their return to Maryland.

This legislation would both encourage residents (especially young people) to engage in public service, and remove a substantial disincentive for choosing Peace Corps service or other international volunteer activities.

Michael O'Neill
Sierra Leone 1978-1982
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Maryland Senate bill 050 and House bill 087 would exempt Peace Corps Volunteers from the residency requirement, making them eligible for in-state tuition. This would bring Returned Peace Corps Volunteers in line with military personnel, Americorps volunteers and others who already receive this exemption.

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers bring back a wealth of information and skills that will benefit the state and country for the rest of their lives. Please vote yes on Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Please make sure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation.

Stephanie Smilay
Kenya 1979-1982
Takoma Park, MD 20912

As a Maryland resident of 30 years, and graduate of a state school, I ask that you please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps should be supported the same as others who serve our nation. Education is important and should be available to those who have served the nation, whether it is the military, Americorps, or the Peace Corps.

Jesse Buff
Nicaragua 1996-1998; Honduras, 2000
Takoma Park, MD 20912

I'm writing in support of RPCVs who come back for degrees post service. As a Maryland resident since 2007 and a graduate of a Master's program at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, I ask that you please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps should be supported the same as others who serve our nation. Education is important and should be available to those who have served the nation, whether it is the military, Americorps, or the Peace Corps. Thank you for your consideration.

Allison Belemvire, MPH
Burkina Faso, 2003-2006
Takoma Park, MD 20912

As a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, I would like to voice my support for Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. If passed, these bills would exempt Peace Corps volunteers from residency requirements that limit eligibility for in-state tuition. Peace Corps volunteers should be recognized for their service to the country, not penalized for being out of state for two years. Military personnel and others, such as Americorps volunteers, already receive this exemption. Please support these bills for Marylanders serving in the Peace Corps.

Michael McGirr
Sierra Leone 1977-80
Takoma Park, MD 20912

As a Maryland resident of 15 years, I ask that you please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps should be supported the same as others who serve our nation. Education is important and should be available to those who have served the nation, whether it is the military, Americorps, or the Peace Corps.

Denise Mortimer
Mali 1995-1997
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Peace Corps service is an outreach to the world which is an expression of our shared values and belief in bringing those values to others around the world. Returned Peace Corp Volunteers (RPCV) then bring back the experiences of dealing with others and understanding the value of seeing the perspective of others. This benefits the communities they live in and the people with whom they interact. Please support Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087 to enable Maryland RPCVs to benefit from in-state residency, so they apply their experience in their education and subsequent jobs.

Bela Mariassy
Senegal 1968-1970
Crownsville, MD 21032

Please rectify this completely unfair situation for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV's). I'm active in the Peace Corps Iran Association, an affiliate of the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) & I fully support SB050 and HB087.

Skip Auld
Iran 1973-1974
Davidsonville, MD 21035

Please show your support for Peace Corps service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Please make sure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation. After returning from my service I did some recruiting for the Peace Corps. One place I recruited was in downtown Baltimore, MD, where I told young people (many of them black) how they could serve their country, the world, and their own future by experiencing life in another country in the Peace Corps.

After this experience I received notice from my New Jersey draft board and was drafted into the US Army. After training I was assigned to the First Infantry Division. I served with the 1st Division for more than one year in Vietnam. My Peace Corps experience influenced the way I viewed the United States mission in Vietnam. The Peace Corps was a life changing experience for me. This "third purpose" of the Peace Corps, "Bringing the world back home," has benefited our country ever since. The Peace Corps experience is helping and will continue to help our nation get through the difficult times we are experiencing today:

- 1. From the global climate crisis,*
- 2. The Covid Pandemic, and*
- 3. The political crisis in the United States and throughout the world.*

Please pass Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087.

Ray Donaldson
Ethiopia 1962-1964
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Peace Corps Volunteers receive modest stipends to cover basic living costs in their host countries and typically return home after two years with little or no savings. Being able to pay in-State tuition would help them and would benefit the Maryland universities that they attend by attracting students who have unique experiences and perspectives. Please enact Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087.

Michael Malloy
Paraguay 1968-1970
Ellicott City, MD 21043

As a former Peace Corps Volunteer who brought my skills and experience learned overseas back to benefit the state of Maryland, I ask that you consider how returned volunteers can positively impact Maryland if they retain their residence here after service. Please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Please make sure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation.

Meagan Downey
Bolivia 2006-2008
Columbia, MD 21044

I have served as a Peace Corps Volunteer for over two-years in Lesotho, Southern Africa. The experience was one that I recall vividly, and one in which I know my services were needed and welcomed. I was there in 2003-2005 when the HIV/AIDS pandemic was extremely high. I conducted bi-weekly workshops on HIV/AIDS at the National University of Lesotho where over 200 students attended each session.

At the beginning, the students came for the films and refreshments; however, they soon understood the seriousness of this disease and the role their actions played in it. Practically, the entire school, including instructors, lined up to be tested by a testing company that was invited to the school on World AIDS Day.

When a Peace Corps Volunteer returns home from providing necessary information and education to developing countries, the PCV should be able to access all of the public services its own country provides. Please exempt Peace Corps Volunteers from the residency requirement and make them eligible for in-state tuition. Please vote for SB050 and HB087. We deserve our state's full support.

Hazel A. Domangue
Lesotho 2003-2005
Columbia, MD 21045

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087, allowing Maryland residents who join the Peace Corps and serve overseas and then return to Maryland the right to be eligible for in-state tuition at state universities.

For the past 40 years, I have worked as a tax professional in Maryland, licensed as a CPA. Many of my clients are Americans who live and work overseas. If they were Maryland residents before they went overseas and plan to return to Maryland after their overseas work is done, they continue to be treated as Maryland residents for tax purposes the entire time they are overseas, even if they never set foot in Maryland during that time. I cannot imagine any reason that, upon completing a tour of service overseas, they would be denied the same tuition benefits available to any other Maryland resident.

Peace Corps service benefits the country of service. It benefits the United States as a whole. And it benefits the state of Maryland. Over the years, my Peace Corps experience has translated into a variety of different opportunities to benefit my Maryland community, through school activities, through church programs and through many other activities. Rather than being penalized, returning Peace Corps volunteers should be offered the same benefits as any other Maryland resident.

Nancy Gallant
Malaysia 1969-1971
Crofton, MD 21114

Peace Corps Volunteers are valuable resources to share technical knowledge and American culture with people of other countries and upon their return to the US, share other cultures and experiences with people here in America. Peace Corps service should not disadvantage a person returning to America. I urge you to support Returned Peace Corps Volunteers by supporting Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087 to ensure those with valuable resources and experiences return to and enhance Maryland.

Stephanie Oegema Toa
Vanuatu 2007-2011
Dundalk, MD 21222

As a former Peace Corps Volunteer I urge your support for Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087 to make Maryland residents who serve abroad in the Peace Corps eligible for in-state tuition when they return. Peace Corps Volunteers serve our nation with distinction and bring back experiences and skills that benefit our communities and our classrooms for years. I served in Peru from 1967 -69, returned to school and got my Master's degree, taught in high school, became director of a non profit international exchange organization based in Maryland and founded a mid-Atlantic human rights organization. While serving abroad Peace Corps Volunteers earn very little - no salary, really, just a monthly stipend. Mine was \$75 a month! Please do SUPPORT SB050 and HB087. Thank you!

Suzanne Hubbard O'Hatnick
Peru 1967-1969
Baltimore, MD 21229

Peace Corps Volunteers serve our nation overseas, as do our military, and have experiences that enrich their lives and their contributions to our society on their return. Please show your support for their service by supporting Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087.

Christopher Lorentz, MD, MPH
Outer Island Chuuk District now FSM, 1970-1972
Towson, MD 21286

I am a long time resident of Maryland and returned to Baltimore to continue my graduate studies after serving with the Peace Corp from 1971 to 1973. I urge you to support Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087 so that Marylanders that serve with this remarkable organization are given equal opportunities for in-state tuition.

Dr. Ken Green
Colombia 1971-1973
Annapolis, MD 21409

I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala from 1990-1993. It was an honor to serve there representing the United States and helping improve nutritional status in the communities where I served. Peace Corps Volunteers serve our nation with distinction, and bring back experiences and skills that benefit our communities and our classrooms as well as we leave an impression of who Americans really are when we become members of their communities.

Please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Please make sure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation when they return to the great state of Maryland.

Robert Ainslie
Guatemala 1990-1993
Swanton MD. 21561

It is a travesty that RPCV's from MD cannot pay in-state tuition upon returning from Peace Corps service. Please rectify this error for the benefit of all. Please show your support for Peace Corps service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Please make sure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation.

H. Jesse Dubin, Ph.D
Chile 1964-1967
Frederick, MD 21702

(Additionally, a number of individuals added their name to this statement)

Peace Corps Volunteers serve our nation with distinction, and bring back experiences and skills that benefit our communities and our classrooms. Please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 050 and House Bill 087. Please make sure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation.

Hanna Siemering DVM
Samoa 2007-20010; The Gambia 2011-2013
Tall Timbers, MD 20690

Joe Mills
Mozambique 2016-2018
Laurel, MD 20708

Deirdre Blackmore
Brazil, 1972-1975 and 1978-1980
Greenbelt, MD

Craig Lamberton
Mali 1989-1991
University Park, MD 20782

Anna Cowell
Rwanda 2010-2012
Hyattville, MD 20783

Kathleen Curtis Fisker
India 1964-1966
Bethesda, MD 20814

Bernard Joseph Fisker
Ecuador 1964-1966
Bethesda, MD 20814

Nicholas Sung
Nepal 2012-2014; Rwanda 2016-2018
Bethesda, MD 20816

Margo BeVier Stern
Nigeria 1966-1967; Ethiopia 1967-1968
Rockville, MD 20850

Sofie Rhoads
Albania 2009-2011
Silver Spring, MD 20902

Frank Claunts
India 1964-1966; Peace Corps Staff US/India 1967-1972
Silver Spring, MD 20905

Wendy Cleary
Thailand 1985-1987
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Ian MacNairn
Botswana 1988-1990
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Kim Brown
Republic of South Africa 2002-2004
Hampstead, Maryland 21074

William "Buck" Lyon-Vaiden
Upper Volta/Burkina Faso 1967-1969
Hampstead, MD 21074

Connie Hankins
India 1963-1965
Pikesville, MD

Lily Merritt
Peru 2016-2018
Baltimore, MD 21212

Imhotep Simba
Ecuador, 2017-2019
Baltimore, MD 21217

Stephen Reese
(on behalf of son Ian who served in Ukraine 2007-2009)
Eldersburg, MD 21784