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Position: FAV



SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY

**Submitted by
Dr. Brad Phillips, Executive Director
Maryland Association of Community Colleges**

January 19, 2022

SB 50 – Higher Education – Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

Position: Support

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges representing Maryland's 16 community colleges offers our support to SB 50 that waives the out-of-state tuition for returning Peace Corps volunteers who are nonresidents of Maryland but are currently domiciled in the State.

We want to thank the sponsor for incorporating those students receiving the waiver in the formulas that determines state aid for community colleges and thereby addresses our concerns with the legislation that was introduced last Session.

DeLR.Lewis_SB 50 support testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Delegate Robbyn Lewis

Position: FAV

ROBBYN LEWIS
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Health and Government Operations
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 50

Higher Education – Returned Peace Corps Volunteers – In-State Tuition

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

I am a former Peace Corps Volunteer, and understand first-hand the dedication and level of service Peace Corps Volunteers provide around the world.

Upon returning to the United States after my service, I pursued my Master's in Public Health at Johns Hopkins University, and subsequently incurred thousands of dollars of student loan debt. I would not have personally benefited from the exemption proposed in Senate Bill 50, but because I have the same lived experience as the returned Peace Corps Volunteers, I know how important this bill would be for them. I am in full support of any assistance provided to returned Peace Corps Volunteers, especially those in pursuit of higher education.

This bill is specifically relevant to the times since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. After March 2020 many Peace Corps Volunteers were required to return early to the United States without completing their service. However upon returning, these Maryland Peace Corps Volunteers were not considered Maryland residents, and those pursuing higher education were not able to receive in-state tuition at Maryland public schools of higher education.

This bill helps to restore the right to higher education for returned Peace Corps Volunteers who have courageously served their country. I respectfully request a favorable report.

Delegate Robbyn Lewis

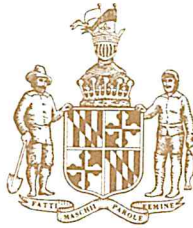
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robbyn Lewis'.

SB050_SenYoung_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Glenn Blumhorst

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Budget and Taxation Committee
Chair, Executive Nominations Committee

Senate Chair, Joint Subcommittee on
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Joint Committee on Administrative,
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January 19, 2022

SB050 - SUPPORT

Higher Education - Returned Peace Corps Volunteers - In-State Tuition

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

SB050 allows Marylanders serving in the Peace Corps to retain or automatically restore their in-state status upon returning to Maryland from deployment overseas while pursuing higher education pursuits. In doing so, this bill provides these Marylanders in-state tuition and State Senatorial and Delegate Scholarships, similar to Marylanders returning from military deployment or AmeriCorps after separation.

In 2019, Maryland ranked tenth among the US States for the number of Peace Corps volunteers per capita, with 259 serving worldwide.² Of the 240,000 volunteers who have served since 1961 over 6,500 have been Maryland residents. In 2020, 66 University of Maryland College Park alumni joined the Peace Corps, and increased Maryland's ranking among states to fifth in the nation for Volunteer-producing States per Capita.

In March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread world-wide, the international Peace Corps operations were suspended and personnel were ordered home. "Volunteers who had planned on being out of the county for more than two years have suddenly been thrown back into America, without jobs and with little chance of getting one, many without health insurance or a permanent place to live."³

Unsure if the Peace Corps would reassign them, some applied to graduate programs. Much to their surprise they were required to submit a residency petition, despite having never changed their permanent address. This is due to an inconsistency in current Maryland law that does not recognize Marylander Peace Corps volunteers as Maryland residents. And yet Maryland law provides in-state tuition exemptions for Marylanders who are AmeriCorps volunteers and military personnel (in certain circumstances their spouses and dependents). The law also provides exemptions for Out-of-State residents who work in Maryland as public school teachers (if the courses are related to or needed for their employment), state and local public safety personnel and their families, as well as certain undocumented immigrants who have resided in the state in certain circumstances.

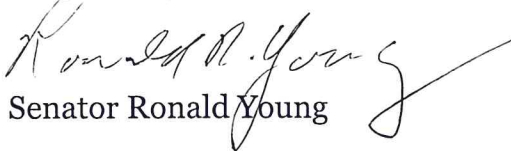
The time spent in the Peace Corp is transformation, shaping the direction of their professional, personal, and communal life for years to come. It is also one of limited income during their

service, making the loss of in-state status even more impactful. This impact is further magnified by the ineligibility for Senatorial and Delegate scholarships. Service in the Peace Corps should not be a discouragement to the advancement of Marylanders' educational and professional goals.

I offer an amendment to add Senators Lee, Lam, and West as Co-sponsors of the bill.

I ask that you vote favorably on **SB050** to correct this oversight and demonstrate that we value the Peace Corps members service and continue to support all forms of service to our country.

Respectfully,


Senator Ronald Young

References:

1. Peace Corps, January 15, 2020, "Peace Corps announced 2019 top volunteer-producing states." Peace Corps. (Dec.8, 2021)
<https://www.peacecorps.gov/news/library/peace-corps-announces-2019-top-volunteer-producing-states/>
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3. Riley, Erika. April 19, 2020. "Peace Corps Volunteers arrive home after global evacuations" Frederick News Post. (Dec 16, 2021)
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Importance of In-state tuition .pdf

Uploaded by: Jody Olsen

Position: FAV

Importance of In-state tuition for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers at Maryland public colleges and universities.

Jody Olsen, PhD (UMD), MSW (UMB), Maryland Resident
Peace Corps Director, 2018-2021, RPCV (Tunisia)
jodyolsen@gmail.com

As a resident of Silver Spring, MD, a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) Tunisia, the 20th Peace Corps Director (2018-2021), and a former Professor of Social Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), I strongly urge your support for passage of Senate Bill 050 (and House companion Bill 087). If approved and signed into law, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers 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.

Many other Maryland RPCVs have already written your committee about the impact of the Peace Corps on their lives here in Maryland and on the communities in which they live and work. As has been stated by others, 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. In addition, the RPCV groups representing Maryland and the DC metropolitan area are the biggest in the country, demonstrating the significant number giving back to their communities in this area.

I want to focus on the positive impact this legislation can have on the State of Maryland from the perspective of my eight year professorship at UMB. The Schools of Social Work and Nursing, UMB, have approved Peace Corps Fellows programs for RPCVs earning Masters Degrees in these professional fields. During my time on campus, I worked actively to recruit returning RPCVs to these programs. During my tenure, the School of Social Work had between ten and twenty RPCV social work graduate students a year. Those who came to the school worked and lived in Baltimore during their two years of study, and then almost half began their professional careers in the area and settled into personal and professional lives in the state. Thus, the Maryland educational institutions drew them to the state and then their follow-on professional opportunities encouraged them to stay as tax paying Maryland residents. I, myself, came from the Peace Corps to Maryland for my Masters in Social Work (1970 – 1972) at UMB. I stayed and have been a Maryland resident for 55 years.

In addition to the longer term contributions being made by RPCVs, these students offer faculty, the schools, and other students their experience and perspectives while in school. SSW faculty, knowing my own background, would stop me in the hall to say how they value their RPCVs' contributions to the classroom, to their field placements in the City and County, and to curriculum development. Faculty (three who were also RPCVs) noted they offered language, cultural, and ethnic diversity of experience and leadership to discussions.

Why this legislation is important

Many potential students deciding on a graduate school after Peace Corps have limited resources. As others have noted, returning Volunteers get only \$8,000 in readjustment allowance after their two years of service. Tuition costs are an inhibitor to graduate education, and Volunteers researching degree programs during overseas service and afterward, look to cost when making this important decision. Potential students have frequently told me they chose other state schools where in-state tuition was offered even though they would have preferred Maryland schools.

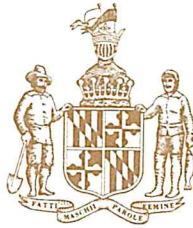
In-state tuition will attract significantly more RPCVs to Maryland colleges and Universities, many of whom then stay and contribute to the state through their professional careers, community service, and economic stability.

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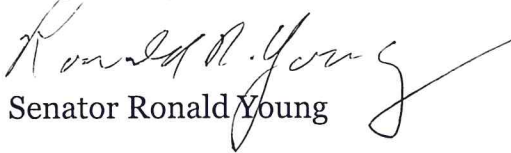
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