

## **Oral Testimony from Kathleen Jingwi in Support of Senate Bill 8**

Hi, My name is Kathleen Ryan Jingwi and I am a High School Mathematics teacher at Bowie HS in Prince George's County. I am in my 33rd year of teaching. I started teaching in the Peace Corps in Cameroon (90-93), and then taught in Detroit for 6 years (starting as a Peace Corps Fellow) before returning to Maryland, my home state, where I am in my 21st year of teaching in Maryland Public Schools. In researching retirement from Maryland public schools, I discovered that I could purchase my years in Michigan and in the Peace Corps, but with no difference in cost between the two. While in Michigan, I received pension money that could be used towards the purchase of my previous service. As a Peace Corps volunteer, I received no such money. When I spoke with the Maryland Department of Education, I learned that I would have to purchase the Peace Corps years at the full value of the years, not as a percentage of what I was paid. In Maryland's own words on Form 26, this is prohibitively expensive.

As a public school teacher, with three children, I have lived modestly yet with no real savings to speak of. I don't know how I would ever have money to purchase the years that I was in the Peace Corps. As part of my research, I discovered form 43 "Claim of Retirement for Military Service". Employees can receive up to 5 years towards their retirement after completing this form, for inactive duty in the National Guard, active duty in any reserve unit, or active duty in the armed forces. I thought, why not also include Peace Corps Service?

As a returned Peace Corps Volunteer, we bring unique skills to the table wherever we are employed, whether in the classroom or elsewhere. Learning to live in a foreign country and respect the traditions and values of others brings a different perspective. As Peace Corps Volunteers, we swear an oath to Support and Defend the Constitution of the United States and are often the only Americans that people in our host countries come in contact with. Peace Corps helps "promote better mutual understanding between Americans and citizens of other countries".

When we return to the US, many RPCV teachers teach in the most challenging school districts. I myself, in addition to teaching in Detroit, also have taught Newcomer Algebra 1 to students who had recently arrived in the US with limited English skills. I served as the Math Department chair in my high school in Prince George's County for 15 years. During that time I started a Math Club which became a chapter of Mu Alpha Theta. I initiated peer Math tutoring, which continued when I left the school and remains in place to this day. My experience in the Peace Corps continues to help me be a better teacher.

Paragraph for Senator: Description of Intent of Bill

The intent of the Bill is to give Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (PRCV's) the same opportunity to receive Retirement Credit with the State of Maryland as the Military and National Guard.

Currently RPCV/s can purchase their years of service at full cost, which is prohibitively expensive, especially as Peace Corps volunteers do not get paid a salary or receive retirement monies for their service.

Military, National Guard or Reserve, attendees of service academies, can all apply to receive credit for their years of service without purchasing those years. This bill intends to add Peace Corps Service to that list.