



The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

SB 845 - Higher Education - Maryland Corps Program Fund - Alterations

Testimony of Senator Bill Ferguson

On March 4, 2020

Before the Budget and Taxation Committee

Why This Bill Matters:

Faith in democratic institutions continues to decline due to polarization and distrust. National service programs like AmeriCorps are known for bringing Americans together from varying socio-economic, geographic, political, and racial backgrounds in the pursuit of a shared vision of improving communities.

At a time when our civic society is in need of fostering dialogue across lines of difference and rediscovering our shared humanity, national service is the mechanism to achieve those goals. Maryland should be leading the way in building out a thoughtful service program based on the needs of our communities and skills employers are seeking.”

As of today, more than 1,400 people serve annually across Maryland — transforming their lives and their communities through a service year. National service programs have been shown to be an effective workforce development tool that allows young people to learn workplace behaviors and skills, experience a specific field, make connections, and develop the pride that comes with a paycheck.

What This Bill Does:

SB 845 will reinvigorate the the Maryland Corps Program by providing a mandatory annual appropriation of \$150,000 to:

1. Study the potential use of the program as a workforce development tool and determine how alumni of the program could be better positioned to meet the current and future needs of employers in Maryland
2. Set up a fund to match grants from the private sector, or foundations received by the board for the fund

Why You Should Vote For This Bill:

SB 845 is the first step of reevaluating and revamping service opportunities in Maryland to ensure that all those who want to serve their communities have the ability to do so. Maryland has 700 local service sites that have brought nearly \$40 million in federal funding through the Corporation for National and Community Service into Maryland while playing a vital role in the communities where they operate. At the same time, 6,800 AmeriCorps and Senior Corps alumni have graduated from these programs and earned \$93.5 million in scholarships since 1994.

Governor Hogan has extolled the merits of national service as well. In 2018, when announcing Maryland as a top 10 AmeriState and Baltimore as a top 10 AmeriCity, Governor Hogan said, "Our administration is proud of this outstanding achievement for Baltimore City and Maryland. AmeriCorps members devote their time, energy, and expertise to serving our communities and addressing the important issues that affect our state, and today's announcement further illustrates the commitment of our citizens to changing Maryland for the better and making a difference in the world."

Maryland should be a leader in expanding service opportunities to all who wish to serve. The Maryland Corps program is fundamentally about repairing the fabric of our democracy by bridging the divide between people with diverse viewpoints and life experiences. At the same time, we can undertake a comprehensive and intentional approach to building out these service opportunities so they align with our state's workforce development needs and alumni are positioned to succeed in a 21st century economy.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 845 and I urge the committee to move this bill with a favorable report.