



THE SHRIVER CENTER

February 10, 2021

Dear Delegates Hill and R. Lewis and members of the Maryland General Assembly:

Thank you for this opportunity to offer supportive testimony regarding HB246 today. It has been my privilege to work with Returning Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) in the State of Maryland for more than 20 years at UMBC's Shriver Center. Sargent Shriver, our Center's namesake was a born and raised 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](#).

Sarge established [The Shriver Center at UMBC](#) in 1993 with a mission to apply the diverse resources of higher education to engaging our Baltimore region's most complex and pressing social questions and challenges. The [Shriver Peaceworker Fellows Program](#), which I direct, has been a signature program of the Center from its beginning. Building on Shriver's legacy as the architect and founding director of the Peace Corps, the Peaceworker Program recruits, supports, and engages annual cohorts of RPCVs in a graduate service-learning program combining full-time study, half-time service with local service organizations and agencies, and a robust ethical reflection and leadership development curriculum. Our mission is to prepare these talented, experienced, and committed individuals for ongoing lives and careers of service and civic engagement here at home.

In my time in this role, I have had the pleasure of directing the fellowship experience of nearly 200 of these RPCVs--earning graduate degrees in more than a dozen disciplines, providing critical capacity within scores of local community partner organizations serving our most vulnerable communities, and gaining invaluable knowledge and experience for their leadership paths ahead. I can tell you without any hesitation, it's working. While these individuals could go almost anywhere upon graduating, about half of our Shriver Fellows are staying right here in Maryland as they launch professional careers in public and nonprofit sector service leadership. They are just the kind of service leaders and global citizens that I would urge Maryland to officially welcome and support.

To illustrate this in broadest strokes, our Shriver RPCVs are now teaching in Baltimore and Maryland public schools, serving in diverse City, State, and Federal government agencies, bringing capacity and leadership to Baltimore's small and large nonprofit organizations, and leading innovative programs in Maryland's higher education sector itself. Here in my home of Baltimore City RPCVs are in leading roles in our local parks creating vibrant and inclusive public spaces; they are liaising and collaborating with our richly diverse immigrant and newcomer communities; they are supporting our creative and resilient young people both in our schools and through afterschool programs, and much more.

Our Shriver program is not the only pathway for RPCVs here in Maryland. There are other regional universities with engaged graduate education missions and programs that attract RPCVs to Maryland's outstanding higher education institutions.

President Kennedy and Sargent Shriver intended this continuity of social impact from the beginning. Making the case to Congress in 1961 for the original Peace Corps Act, Kennedy argued: "The Benefits of the Peace Corps will not be limited to the countries in which it serves. Our own men and women will be enriched by the experience of living and working in foreign lands. They will have acquired new skills and experiences which will aid them in their future careers and add to our own country's supply of trained personnel and teachers. They will return better able to assume the responsibilities of American citizenship and with greater understanding of our global responsibilities"

I thank Delegates Hill and R. Lewis today for introducing HB246, which would exempt Returning Volunteers whose home is in Maryland from paying the much higher nonresident tuition rates for graduate school. This Bill will close the residency gap that can occur during Peace Corps Volunteers significant time of two or more years service abroad before returning home. This gap, which does not reflect a shift in volunteers' actual home residency, creates a costly negative impact for individuals who can return to find themselves classified as nonresidents. At a minimum HB246 recognizes and values the national service contributions of Maryland RPCVs by preserving their home residency status when it has only changed as a result of their service. This is particularly important for RPCVs because they generally have highly limited financial resources (or high financial aid need) as a result of their service. The difference between resident and nonresident tuition is likely the difference between them continuing their education and professional development or not. As I've argued above, a financial barrier at this key point in a lifelong service trajectory would have consequences not only for the affected individuals, but would mean a loss of positive social and economic impact for our Maryland communities for years to come.

I support HB246 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. I 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, I believe that correcting this residency gap through HB246 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joby Taylor", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joby Taylor, Ph.D.
Director, Shriver Peaceworker Fellows Program
Shriver Center at UMBC

