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Committee

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**HB246 - SUPPORT**

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

Dear Chair McIntosh, Vice-Chair Jackson, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

HB246 will allow Marylanders serving in the Peace Corps to retain or automatically restore their in-state status upon returning to Maryland from deployment overseas while assuming higher education pursuits. This will allow them to be eligible for in-state tuition and eligible for State Delegate and Senatorial Scholarships, just as are Marylanders returning from military deployment after separation.

Peace Corp volunteers are changemakers who promote world peace, intra-national friendship and cross-cultural collaboration. They build local capacity for addressing problems to improve lives, advance greater understanding of the United States and our people, all while increasing our collective understanding of other nations and people from around the world.

In 2019, Maryland ranked fifth among states in the number of Peace Corps volunteers per capita, with 259 serving in 2019<sup>1</sup>. Of the 240,000 volunteers who have served since 1961 over 6,506 have been Maryland residents<sup>2</sup>. In 2020, 66 University of Maryland College Park alumni joined the Peace Corps, an increase from 11, raising its college ranking to fourth in the nation<sup>3</sup>. In March 2020 as SARS-Covid 19 spread worldwide and the COVID-19 pandemic reached every corner, international Peace Corps operations were suspended and personnel were ordered home.

I became aware of this strange and, I believe, unfair policy quirk when one of my constituents, Emily Manginnis, was ordered home at the beginning of the pandemic by the Peace Corps after serving in Thailand the preceding 12-months. She was surprised to find on applying and being accepted into the University of Maryland School of Public Policy that she was required to submit a residency petition, despite having never changed her permanent address or seen herself as “moving”. The petition was denied because the Peace Corps is not an allowed exception. The unanticipated loss of in-state residency status increased her tuition **and** made her ineligible for my Delegation Scholarship, despite being deserving and my petitioning for in-state status recognition.

For many, the time spent doing Peace Corps work is transformational, shaping the direction of their professional, personal and communal life for years to come. It should not become a discouragement to advance their educational and professional goals because such pursuits become significantly less affordable as a result of that experience.

As my previous legislative aide, John Michael Gudger, noted when discovering Emily’s situation, “There are in-state tuition exemptions for public school teachers if the courses are related to or needed for their employment, military personnel and their spouses and dependents in certain circumstances, state and local public safety personnel and their family, AmeriCorp volunteers, certain undocumented immigrants who have resided in the state in certain circumstances.” We in Maryland should “want to attract Peace Corps Volunteers to our institutions as they are internationally minded and have real world experience.”

Because Maryland Peace Corps Volunteers receive limited income during their service time, they are generally less able to take on the cost of graduate school afterwards than are grad students who take time before grad school to work or travel. The loss of in-state status is thus even more impactful.

If we want to encourage people to consider all forms of service to our country, let's not continue penalizing Peace Corps workers. Vote favorably on HB246 to demonstrate you value them and their service. Vote favorably on HB246 so that, where their education is concerned, we will no longer allow time away from their Maryland home cost them more than they have already willingly given.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terri L. Hill', with a long horizontal line extending from the top left of the signature.

Terri L. Hill, M.D.

1. Peace Corps. "Peace Corps announces 2019 top volunteer-producing states" *Peace Corps*. (January 15, 2020)  
<https://www.peacecorps.gov/news/library/peace-corps-announces-2019-top-volunteer-producing-states/>.
2. Lewandowski, Hannah. "Peace Corps ranks UMD fourth for volunteer production, jumping ahead six places" *The Diamondback*. (March, 2020)  
<https://dbknews.com/2020/03/13/peace-corps-fourth-ranking-umd-volunteer/>.
3. See 2.