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*The Next Step in Changing the World*

**January 25, 2024**  
**SB 0008 – SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chairman Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

As President and CEO of the non-governmental, non-profit National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), I write to urge your support for passage of Senate Bill 0008 (State and Local Retirement and Pension Systems – Service Credit – Returned Peace Corps Volunteers).

This legislation would further enhance existing opportunities for state employees who served our nation in the Peace Corps to receive retirement credit for their Peace Corps service. If approved and signed into law, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) would be treated the same as military personnel to receive credit for their service.

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 143 foreign countries.

After serving for two (or in some cases, three or more) years overseas, RPCVs come home with a variety of skills and experiences that benefit our state and the communities where they reside. We are proud that the spirit of service to others remains a lifelong commitment for a vast majority of Peace Corps community members. Because of this, many of our members around the country continue their commitment to public service by working for the federal, state, or local government.

A 2021 nationwide survey of more than 4,000 RPCVs found that among the top five career choices following service was “public service, government, law, and policy.”

Furthermore, the survey found that “A majority of RPCVs reported that their Peace Corps experience enhanced their intercultural awareness (84 percent), resiliency (74 percent), problem-solving (53 percent), and communication skills (52 percent).” Seventy-four percent of those respondents reported having used their enhanced skills in their professional work, with many saying they applied those skills on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

Maryland is leading the nation when it comes to embracing the importance of service. The creation of a Department of Service and Innovation, coupled with Governor Moore’s 2023

establishment of the nation's first public service year option, are only the latest examples of our state's rich history and recognition of the importance of service, in its many forms.

For many, Peace Corps service results in a change in an RPCV's career path. A 2011 survey of the Peace Corps community found that at that time, a large number of volunteers who had served in the 2000s entered the fields of education and teaching, and health care.

However, Peace Corps service is a financial sacrifice. Volunteers who provide two years of service to our country are paid for their work while in service, but paid at a rate commensurate to that received by host country nationals. This results in most if not all of their income while in service being used to cover everyday expenses.

The Peace Corps does provide volunteers with a "readjustment" allowance, a payment that accumulates each month and is set aside for volunteers at the end of their service. Recent volunteers' readjustment pay amounted to roughly \$8,000. However, having been away from home for more than two years, these funds are needed for RPCVs to reestablish themselves as they prepare for the next step in their career path. This allowance is needed and used to cover everything from rent, transportation, health care and food, to new clothing, laptops, and cell phones. Additionally, many younger RPCVs also need to resume repayment of student loans.

The result of this is that RPCVs sacrifice at least two years of their careers, with very little – if any – financial benefit to show for it. For state employees, this financial sacrifice should be recognized with the highest possible support when it comes to benefits such as retirement credit.

For these reasons and more, I ask for your support of those Marylanders who continue to serve through employment in state government. Please make sure that Senate Bill 008 is reported favorably out of committee and approved by the Senate.

Sincerely,



Dan Baker – President and CEO  
National Peace Corps Association  
Bolivia 1999-2002; Timor-Leste 2002-03; Peace Corps Staff 2003-16  
(resident of Silver Spring MD)

**References:**

- Peace Corps website ([www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov))
- *The Power of Peace Corps - The Domestic Benefit of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers* (Survey conducted by a National Peace Corps Association Task Force) March 2023
- *A Call to Peace - Perspectives of Volunteers on the Peace Corps at 50* (A report by Civic Enterprises and the National Peace Corps Association in partnership with Peter D. Hart Research Associates) September 2011