

Letters in Support of Senate Bill 8

My name is Sarah Moenter, a 3rd grade special educator and one of only about 20 Lead Teachers employed by Baltimore City Public Schools this year. This is my 14th year in education, a vocation ignited through my AmeriCorps experience serving with City Year in Los Angeles. My passion for service and working to improve underserved communities through education carried me to Peace Corps service in Armenia, where I served as an English teacher in two primary schools, working with three counterparts and hundreds of students from 2014-2016. In addition to my classroom work, I developed grants to improve the schools' facilities, including the construction of a playground and new furniture to replace the dilapidated Soviet-era desks and chairs. I also founded an environmental education camp called GROW: Growing and Rejuvenating our World, which brought summer camps to villages around the country and continued to be run by local volunteers after my departure in 2016.

The skills and passions I developed in the Peace Corps, including cross-cultural communication, teaching of English to non-native speakers, grant writing, resourcefulness, and environmentalism have continued to inform my work in Baltimore City Schools, where I have been teaching since 2017. As a Lead Teacher, I provide coaching for novice teachers and manage schoolwide intervention programs to support students struggling with class performance and behavior. I have secured grants for my school this year to develop a science lab, an outdoor learning classroom, and a teachers' lounge. Teaching at a school with about 60% multilingual learners, I continue to utilize my training as an English teacher for non-native speakers to ensure my students are able to access the curriculum as well as build their communication skills. As the founder and co-facilitator of our school's Green Team, I manage the recycling program and lead an environmental club after-school for our students' 3rd-5th graders.

While my years of service, both through AmeriCorps and Peace Corps, had an incredible impact on my career in education and my personal development, they did not provide financially to my ability to purchase those years of service. As a volunteer in Armenia, I

made about \$300 per month, which was barely enough to provide for rent to my host family and food for the month, let alone put any aside for savings or to plan for my “life after Peace Corps”. Receiving these years towards my retirement would be a huge benefit to offset the delay in starting a salaried career through my volunteer service. This would also provide great incentive for other volunteers looking for post-service options to bring their skills to Maryland, where our students would certainly benefit from their diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. Thank you for your consideration.

I am writing in support of SB 8, State and Local Retirement and Pension Systems - Service Credit - Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. I am a resident of Baltimore City, and I served in the Peace Corps from 1994-1996 in Mali, West Africa. The intent of SB 8 is to give Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) the same opportunity to receive Retirement Credit with the State of Maryland as the Military and National Guard.

Since returning from Peace Corps service, I have had many opportunities to work with students, and in many cases my Peace Corps service enhanced my ability to communicate with them about both the importance of intercultural interactions and about ways to better communicate with people from different countries and cultures. I feel strongly that my Peace Corps experience has made me better at working with students, and for that reason, I feel there is a real value to incentivizing RPCVs to work in Maryland's public schools. I would like to encourage all Maryland lawmakers to support this bill and ensure that more Maryland students can benefit from the extraordinary experience that Peace Corps offers to American citizens.

Sincerely,
Craig Tower
PC Mali, 1994-1996
Baltimore City, MD
craigtower@yahoo.com

I am writing this brief note in support of the SB 8 bill providing retirement service for the time spent as a Peace Corps Volunteer. 41% of all PCVs serve in the Education

sector. It is my understanding that both the Military and National Guard are entitled to this retirement plan in Maryland. And both the Military and National Guard claim their work makes America safer for Democracy. In my judgement Peace Corps Volunteers also can make the same claim. By working and living side by side around the world with host country nationals to achieve development and social welfare goals that they have identified as important demonstrates to host country nationals that we Americans care about them and their achievement of their goals. The friendships formed are deep and lasting and help to make America safer for all. The route is different from the Military and National Guard but the end result can be the same.

I encourage you to include Returned Peace Corps Volunteers in the Maryland retirement program. It makes good sense.

And thank you.

Sincerely,
Linda Miller Zenick
Rural Health Nurse Midwife
RPCV Borneo, Malaysia
1967-68

Dear Senator Washington,

I am writing to urge your support for SB 8, which would further enhance opportunities for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who are Maryland state employees to secure retirement credit for Peace Corps service. I am a resident of University Park and I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Mali from 1989 to 1991.

The intent of the Bill is to give RPCVs the same opportunity to receive Retirement Credit with the State of Maryland as the Military and National Guard.

Currently RPCVs 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.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,
Craig Lamberton

I am urging support of MD Senate Bill 8. A decade ago, shortly following the end of my Peace Corps Service, I moved to Maryland. If I had the opportunity to buy into my service years, I might have pursued state government work. I was able to purchase my years toward federal service based on my stipend earnings which made it much more affordable. 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 which would make the State of Maryland government more competitive in recruiting former Peace Corps Volunteers.

Teena Curry
RPCV Madagascar 2010-2013

I have read about the bill allowing Maryland teachers to claim Peace Corps service years in calculating their retirement and I wholeheartedly support this effort. As a teacher for many year in parochial, independent, and public schools in Maryland and now as a recipient of a monthly Maryland pension, I appreciate how important this source of income is. After my service in Charles County Public Schools, I became the Director of World Wise Schools, the office of the Peace Corps which brings the Peace Corps experience to U.S. classrooms. In developing and publishing curriculum for our American students and arranging for returned Peace Corps Volunteers to visit American classrooms, I came to know many of these former Volunteers and understand that their service, while different from the military, is very important in fostering American ideals abroad and showcasing the best America has to offer. The knowledge that Peace Corps service is counted in Maryland as a valuable contribution toward retirement, as reflected in this bill, would also encourage talented and experienced future teachers to apply to Maryland schools at a time when there is a real teacher shortage.

Sincerely,
Eileen M. Mattingly
Teacher and Former Director of World Wise Schools

(Additionally, a number of individuals added their name to this statement)

Peace Corps Volunteers serve our nation with distinction, and bring back experiences and skills that benefit our communities and our classrooms. Please show your support for this service by passing Senate Bill 008. Please make sure Marylanders who serve in the Peace Corps are supported the same as others who serve our nation.

Joshua Davis
Prince George's County Public Schools
The International High School at Largo
Peace Corps Ukraine 2011-2013

Katie Shanks
Baltimore City Public Schools
Mozambique 2019-pandemic 2020

Becky Boltz Taylor
Montgomery County Public Schools
Ethiopia 98-99/China 00-02

Kimberly Jones
Baltimore City Public Schools
Timor-Leste 19-20

Sean Michael Emyrs Canterbury
Baltimore City Public Schools
Ecuador 2019-pandemic 2020

Jillian Cordova
Former Maryland State Government
Peru 2020-2012

Karen Winchester Delrio
Baltimore County Public Schools
Paraguay 95-97

Amy Barry
Prince George's County-Private School Teacher
Paraguay 82-83

Ab Bear

Anne Arundel County-Private School Teacher
Togo 89,91