

My name is Tristan Larson; I'm a former North Dakota resident and Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, and I am writing in support of HB 1529.

When I returned from my Peace Corps service as an education extension worker in Tanzania I was unsure of how I wanted the next chapter of my life to unfold. I eventually decided that furthering my education as an engineer would be the best use of my time and help me achieve my career goals. I was drawn to the state of Pennsylvania through a graduate program at Villanova University which funded my studies in exchange for my work in a mentorship role for undergraduate students interested in international development. This opportunity was provided to me because of my Peace Corps service.

This decision proved to be the right one - working with Villanova was an enriching experience for me as well as the undergraduate engineering students that I mentored, and led to my current position as a civil engineer with the US Forest Service. Without the incentive of tuition assistance, this career path would not have opened to me.

Providing Returned Peace Corps Volunteers with tuition assistance is a good investment - we are a passionate and motivated group of professionals who are driven to make a positive difference in the world, many of whom would be happy to find opportunities to contribute to North Dakota collegiate academics and communities. Incentivizing Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to come to North Dakota will improve the educational ecosystem while also providing career development opportunities for those Volunteers.

HB 1529 would be a step forward for North Dakota in attracting and retaining talent. I support passing this bill, and would encourage North Dakota's representatives to do the same.