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February 5, 2025

Dear Chairman Beltz, Vice Chair Hauck, and other members of the House Agriculture Committee,

On behalf of the non-governmental alumni organization of the Peace Corps community, I write to express our strong support for House Bill 1529, bi-partisan legislation introduced by Representative Mary Schneider.

As you know, this legislation would add individuals who successfully served in the Peace Corps to the list of those who would be eligible for in-state tuition at North Dakota colleges and universities.

Since 1961, more than 240,000 United States citizens – including nearly 600 citizens from North Dakota – have proudly served our nation as Peace Corps Volunteers. Currently, 3,500 volunteers are serving in more than 60 countries, representing the very best values of our country on a daily basis.

For nearly 65 years, Peace Corps Volunteers have served our nation, sacrificing a multitude of hometown comforts, to serve others beyond themselves. Sadly, more than 300 of these volunteers paid the ultimate sacrifice, losing their life during service. These individuals include James Redmann of Minot, who died from a drowning accident while serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in St. Lucia, in July, 1966.

The University of North Dakota is among those schools which is training the next generation of potential Peace Corps Volunteers by offering a “Peace Corps Prep” program, which offers an 18 credit curriculum to help prepare students interested in applying to serve our nation (see <https://und.edu/programs/peace-corps-prep/index.html>).

Modeled after legislation passed in Colorado in 2023, House Bill 1529 would raise the prospect for North Dakota volunteers and others who have completed their Peace Corps service to continue their education in your state, and raise the possibility that they will stay and bring their unique skills to your state.

Among the unique skill sets that are beneficial to states and individual communities? Peace Corps service results in a wide range of intangible skills that are highly beneficial. Peace Corps Volunteers are resilient. They are extremely resourceful. They can work to find solutions when confronted with ambiguity or limited assets. They are collaborative problem solvers.

In conclusion, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers are highly coveted servants, who are dedicated to strengthening states and communities where they choose to reside. House Bill 1529 raises the prospect that more of these individuals will reside and work in North Dakota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Baker", written over a white background.

Dan Baker

President/CEO

National Peace Corps Association