

116TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To mobilize individuals in the United States in the fight against coronavirus by expanding volunteer opportunities in AmeriCorps, expanding employment opportunities at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and utilizing the expertise of Peace Corps volunteer leaders whose service ended on March 15, 2020, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Mr. MARKEY (for himself and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

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**A BILL**

To mobilize individuals in the United States in the fight against coronavirus by expanding volunteer opportunities in AmeriCorps, expanding employment opportunities at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and utilizing the expertise of Peace Corps volunteer leaders whose service ended on March 15, 2020, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Undertaking National  
3 Initiatives to Tackle Epidemic Act of 2020” or the  
4 “UNITE Act of 2020”.

5 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

6 Congress makes the following findings:

7 (1) The outbreak of the novel coronavirus,  
8 SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID–19 (referred to  
9 in this Act as the “coronavirus”), has disrupted the  
10 lives of all individuals in the United States and re-  
11 quired enormous sacrifice. In following the guidance  
12 of public health officials, individuals in the United  
13 States have and can continue to play a key role in  
14 defeating their common, invisible enemy.

15 (2) The Corporation for National and Commu-  
16 nity Service (referred to in this Act as “CNCS”),  
17 through the health, disaster, and poverty services  
18 administered by the CNCS under the 3 flagship  
19 AmeriCorps programs (AmeriCorps VISTA,  
20 AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps State and Na-  
21 tional Volunteers), is uniquely positioned to aid  
22 frontline workers and communities most impacted by  
23 the coronavirus public health emergency if the Presi-  
24 dent of the United States fully mobilizes those 3  
25 programs.

1           (3) The Federal Emergency Management Agen-  
2           cy (referred to in this section as “FEMA”), tasked  
3           with leading aspects of the whole-of-government re-  
4           sponse to the coronavirus outbreak, is reportedly  
5           understaffed of those frontline workers that are es-  
6           sential to responding to the public health emergency.

7           (4) On March 15, 2020, the Peace Corps invol-  
8           untarily ended the service of approximately 7,300  
9           volunteers. Many of them acquired public health  
10          skills in countries abroad, which may also be applied  
11          to further service in AmeriCorps, service in FEMA,  
12          or continuing service in the Peace Corps once oper-  
13          ations of the Peace Corps are to resume.

14 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF THE SENATE.**

15          It is the sense of the Senate that—

16               (1) the President should fully utilize the com-  
17               petencies of the Federal Government workforce to  
18               battle the outbreak of coronavirus, the worst global  
19               health emergency the United States has faced in a  
20               century, as well as make available expanded opportu-  
21               nities for individuals in the United States desiring to  
22               serve their country in its time of need;

23               (2) the President should elevate the role of  
24               CNCS within the whole-of-government response to

1 the coronavirus outbreak, including by urging its  
2 Chief Executive Officer to—

3 (A) in cooperation with the White House  
4 Coronavirus Task Force, take steps to actively  
5 encourage volunteerism and specifically encour-  
6 age individuals in the United States to serve as  
7 a volunteer in an AmeriCorps program; and

8 (B) prioritize AmeriCorps grants that pro-  
9 vide assistance to those most impacted by the  
10 coronavirus public health emergency and recruit  
11 the maximum number of volunteers authorized  
12 by law, particularly focusing on the recently un-  
13 employed;

14 (3) the United States should expand the Cadre  
15 of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees (CORE)  
16 program, administered by the Federal Emergency  
17 Management Agency, to enlist individuals in the  
18 United States to solve public health and supply-man-  
19 agement challenges related to the coronavirus out-  
20 break, as well as related to wildfires, hurricanes, and  
21 other disasters; and

22 (4) bolstering the number full-time positions at  
23 the Federal Emergency Management Agency will  
24 also expand national service opportunities for quali-  
25 fied individuals in the United States who have be-

1       come unemployed or underemployed as a result of  
2       the coronavirus outbreak, including the approxi-  
3       mately 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers whose service  
4       ended on March 15, 2020.

5       **SEC. 4. MOBILIZING PROGRAMS IN THE CORONAVIRUS**  
6                                   **PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY.**

7       (a) **PRIORITIZING CERTAIN AGREEMENTS.—**

8               (1) **IN GENERAL.—**Notwithstanding any provi-  
9       sion of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973  
10       (42 U.S.C. 4950 et seq.) or the National and Com-  
11       munity Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12501 et  
12       seq.), the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS shall, for  
13       the period described in paragraph (2), prioritize ex-  
14       isting agreements, or enter into new agreements,  
15       with public and private nonprofit organizations, in  
16       consultation with the Secretary of Health and  
17       Human Services, the Director of the Centers for  
18       Disease Control and Prevention, the Administrator  
19       of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and  
20       State governments, that will direct volunteers in pro-  
21       grams administered by CNCS to assignments that  
22       assist those individuals most impacted by the  
23       coronavirus public health emergency, including as-  
24       signments—

1 (A) providing support services to veterans,  
2 homeless populations, the elderly, and other in-  
3 dividuals who may be most vulnerable during  
4 the coronavirus public health emergency;

5 (B) supporting health care professionals  
6 and related positions;

7 (C) offering before- and after-school tutor-  
8 ing and instruction for children in low-income  
9 areas, including through remote learning;

10 (D) enabling children to access remote  
11 learning by performing technology consults for  
12 their families remotely and at home; and

13 (E) performing other functions consistent  
14 with addressing the coronavirus public health  
15 emergency.

16 (2) PERIOD.—The period described in this  
17 paragraph—

18 (A) shall begin on the date of enactment of  
19 this Act; and

20 (B) shall end—

21 (i) not earlier than the date of the  
22 conclusion of the coronavirus public health  
23 emergency; and

24 (ii) not later than 2 years after the  
25 conclusion of such emergency.

1 (b) AUTHORIZATION FOR ADDITIONAL RECRUIT-  
2 MENT OF AMERICORPS VOLUNTEERS.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—

4 (A) INCREASE IN NUMBER OF POSI-  
5 TIONS.—Section 121(f)(1)(B) of the National  
6 and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.  
7 12571(f)(1)(B)) is amended—

8 (i) in clause (vi), by striking “and” at  
9 the end;

10 (ii) in clause (vii), by adding “and” at  
11 the end; and

12 (iii) by adding at the end the fol-  
13 lowing:

14 “(viii) 500,000 for each of fiscal years  
15 2020 through 2022;”.

16 (B) REAUTHORIZATIONS.—

17 (i) AMERICORPS VISTA.—Section  
18 501(a)(1) of the Domestic Volunteer Serv-  
19 ice Act of 1973 (42 U.S.C. 5081(a)(1)) is  
20 amended by striking “\$100,000,000 for  
21 fiscal year 2010 and such sums as may be  
22 necessary for each of the fiscal years 2011  
23 through 2014” and inserting “such sums  
24 as may be necessary for each of fiscal  
25 years 2020 through 2022”.

1                   (ii) AMERICORPS NCCC.—Section  
2                   501(a)(1) of the National and Community  
3                   Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.  
4                   12681(a)(1)) is amended—

5                   (I) by striking clauses (i) and  
6                   (ii); and

7                   (II) by striking “title I—” and  
8                   inserting “title I, such sums as may  
9                   be necessary for each of fiscal years  
10                  2020 through 2022.”.

11                  (iii) AMERICORPS STATE AND NA-  
12                  TIONAL VOLUNTEERS.—Section 501(a)(2)  
13                  of the National and Community Service  
14                  Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)(2)) is  
15                  amended by striking “2010 through 2014”  
16                  and inserting “2020 through 2022”.

17                  (2) REQUIREMENT.—To fulfill the purposes of  
18                  subsection (a), the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS  
19                  shall expedite the recruitment and selection of volun-  
20                  teers who are—

21                         (A) unemployed veterans;

22                         (B) individuals who become unemployed or  
23                  underemployed as a result of the coronavirus  
24                  public health emergency; and



1 (C) AmeriCorps members, or Peace Corps  
2 volunteers, who have had their service ended as  
3 a result of such emergency.

4 (c) BRIEFING TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 30  
5 days after the date of enactment of this Act, and every  
6 180 days thereafter, the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS  
7 shall submit a report, to the Committee on Health, Edu-  
8 cation, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Com-  
9 mittee on Education and Labor of the House of Rep-  
10 resentatives, on the operating plan of the CNCS to carry  
11 out subsections (a) and (b), including the amendments  
12 under subsection (b).

13 (d) ENHANCED STIPEND.—Section 105(b)(2)(A) of  
14 the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (42 U.S.C.  
15 4955(b)(2)(A)) is amended to read as follows:

16 “(A) beginning for fiscal year 2020, the min-  
17 imum allowance is not less than an amount equal to  
18 not less than 200 percent of the income official pov-  
19 erty line (as defined by the Office of Management  
20 and Budget, and revised annually in accordance with  
21 section 673(2) of the Community Services Block  
22 Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2))) applicable to a fam-  
23 ily of 1; and”.

24 (e) CORONAVIRUS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DE-  
25 FINED.—In this section, the term “coronavirus public

1 health emergency” means the public health emergency de-  
2 clared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services  
3 under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42  
4 U.S.C. 247d) on January 31, 2020, with respect to  
5 COVID-19.

6 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION FOR SURGE CAPACITY FOR FED-**  
7 **ERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of the Federal  
9 Emergency Management Agency shall appoint, admin-  
10 ister, and expedite the training of an additional 10,000  
11 Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees, under  
12 the Response and Recover Directorate (referred to in this  
13 section as “CORE employees”) under the Office of Re-  
14 sponse and Recovery, above the level of such employees  
15 in fiscal year 2019, to address the coronavirus public  
16 health emergency.

17 (b) DETAIL OF CORE EMPLOYEES.—A CORE em-  
18 ployee may be detailed, through mutual agreement, to any  
19 Federal agency that is a participating agency in the White  
20 House Coronavirus Task Force, to fulfill an assignment  
21 for the Task Force, including—

22 (1) logistical support for the supply chain of  
23 medical equipment;

24 (2) tracing contacts of infected individuals and  
25 their status while being quarantined;

1           (3) providing nutritional assistance to vulner-  
2           able populations; and

3           (4) administrative duties such as staffing call  
4           centers to disseminate public-health related informa-  
5           tion to the public.

6           (c) REQUIREMENT.—As soon as feasible, the Admin-  
7           istrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency  
8           shall make public job announcements to fill the CORE em-  
9           ployee positions authorized under subsection (a), which  
10          shall prioritize hiring from among the following groups of  
11          individuals:

12           (1) Unemployed veterans of the Armed Forces.

13           (2) Individuals who have become unemployed or  
14          underemployed as a result of the coronavirus public  
15          health emergency.

16           (3) AmeriCorps members, or Peace Corps Vol-  
17          unteers, who have had their service ended as a result  
18          of the coronavirus public health emergency.

19          (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
20          are authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator of  
21          the Federal Emergency Management Agency such sums  
22          as are necessary for each of fiscal years 2020, 2021, and  
23          2022 to carry out this section.

24          (e) CORONAVIRUS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DE-  
25          FINED.—In this section, the term “coronavirus public

1 health emergency” has the meaning given the term in sec-  
2 tion 4(e).

3 **SEC. 6. PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER REENROLLMENT ELIGI-**  
4 **BILITY AND TRANSITION ASSISTANCE.**

5 (a) ASSISTANCE FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS  
6 WHOSE SERVICE ENDED INVOLUNTARILY.—Notwith-  
7 standing section 5 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C.  
8 2504), with respect to all of the Peace Corps volunteers  
9 whose service ended involuntarily on March 15, 2020 (or  
10 earlier, in the case of volunteers who were serving China  
11 and Mongolia), when the Director of the Peace Corps sus-  
12 pended all volunteer operations due to the coronavirus  
13 public health emergency, the Director of the Peace Corps  
14 shall—

15 (1) continue to provide the health care de-  
16 scribed in section 5(e) of such Act to the volunteer  
17 during the 6-month period beginning on March 15,  
18 2020, to supplement the benefits to which the volun-  
19 teer is otherwise entitled under section 5 of such  
20 Act;

21 (2) waive all nonmedical application require-  
22 ments for the reenrollment of the volunteer during  
23 the 1-year period beginning on March 15, 2020;

24 (3) expedite the medical clearance for such vol-  
25 unteer to facilitate reenrollment;

1           (4) permit the volunteer, to the extent possible,  
2           to resume the activity in which the volunteer had  
3           been serving at the time of his or her involuntarily  
4           end of service or any other activity, by mutual agree-  
5           ment; and

6           (5) provide the volunteer, beginning on the date  
7           of reenrollment, with the compensation, allowances,  
8           benefits, and other terms and conditions of service  
9           to which the volunteer is entitled under such Act.

10          (b) REPORT ON RESTART OF PEACE CORPS OPER-  
11          ATIONS FOLLOWING END OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMER-  
12          GENCY.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the en-  
13          actment of this Act, the Director of the Peace Corps shall  
14          submit a report to the Committee on Foreign Relations  
15          of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of  
16          the House of Representatives that describes the efforts of  
17          the Peace Corps—

18                (1) to offer reenrollment to each Peace Corps  
19                volunteer whose service ended involuntarily on  
20                March 15, 2020 (or earlier, in the case of volunteers  
21                who were serving China and Mongolia), due to the  
22                coronavirus public health emergency;

23                (2) to obtain approval from countries, as nec-  
24                essary, to return reenrolled volunteers to their pre-  
25                vious assignments; and

1           (3) to identify the anticipated additional appro-  
2           priations or new statutory authorities that would be  
3           necessary to achieve the goal of safely redeploying  
4           7,300 Peace Corps volunteers during the 1-year pe-  
5           riod beginning on the date on which Peace Corps op-  
6           erations resume.