

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6853

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.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 13, 2020

Mr. PHILLIPS (for himself, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. TONKO, Mr. SARBANES, Ms. SPANBERGER, Mr. HUFFMAN, and Mr. CROW) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor, and in addition to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**

15 It is the sense of the House of Representatives 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;

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; and

14 (C) provide State Commissions, as defined
15 in section 101 of the National and Community
16 Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12511), with
17 the flexibility to award and amend grants and
18 to remove undue burdens relating to the
19 onboarding of volunteers;

20 (3) the United States should expand the Cadre
21 of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees (CORE)
22 program, administered by the Federal Emergency
23 Management Agency, to enlist individuals in the
24 United States to solve public health and supply-man-
25 agement challenges related to the coronavirus out-

1 break, as well as related to wildfires, hurricanes, and
2 other disasters; and

3 (4) bolstering the number of full-time positions
4 at the Federal Emergency Management Agency will
5 also expand national service opportunities for quali-
6 fied individuals in the United States who have be-
7 come unemployed or underemployed as a result of
8 the coronavirus outbreak, including the approxi-
9 mately 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers whose service
10 ended on March 15, 2020.

11 **SEC. 4. MOBILIZING PROGRAMS IN THE CORONAVIRUS**
12 **PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY.**

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

14 (1) **IN GENERAL.—**Notwithstanding any provi-
15 sion of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973
16 (42 U.S.C. 4950 et seq.) or the National and Com-
17 munity Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12501 et
18 seq.), the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS, in con-
19 sultation with the Secretary of Health and Human
20 Services, the Director of the Centers for Disease
21 Control and Prevention, the Administrator of the
22 Federal Emergency Management Agency, State gov-
23 ernments, and State Commissions, as defined in sec-
24 tion 101 of the National and Community Service Act
25 of 1990, shall, for the period described in paragraph

1 (2), prioritize existing agreements, or enter into new
2 agreements, with public and private nonprofit orga-
3 nizations, that will direct volunteers in programs ad-
4 ministered by CNCS to assignments that assist indi-
5 viduals most impacted by the coronavirus public
6 health emergency, including assignments—

7 (A) providing support services to veterans,
8 homeless populations, the elderly, and other in-
9 dividuals who may be most vulnerable during
10 the coronavirus public health emergency;

11 (B) supporting health care professionals
12 and related positions;

13 (C) offering before- and after-school tutor-
14 ing and instruction for children in low-income
15 areas, and offering adult basic skills and lit-
16 eracy tutoring and instruction, including
17 through remote learning;

18 (D) expanding broadband infrastructure
19 for underserved and rural communities;

20 (E) serving as nonpartisan poll workers for
21 an election for public office;

22 (F) performing functions consistent with
23 implementation of the decennial census; and

24 (G) performing other functions consistent
25 with addressing the coronavirus public health

1 emergency, including assisting with testing and
2 contact tracing.

3 (2) PERIOD.—The period described in this
4 paragraph—

5 (A) shall begin on the date of enactment of
6 this Act; and

7 (B) shall end—

8 (i) not earlier than the date of the
9 conclusion of the coronavirus public health
10 emergency; and

11 (ii) not later than 2 years after the
12 conclusion of such emergency.

13 (b) AUTHORIZATION FOR ADDITIONAL RECRUIT-
14 MENT OF AMERICORPS VOLUNTEERS.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—

16 (A) INCREASE IN NUMBER OF POSI-
17 TIONS.—Section 121(f)(1)(B) of the National
18 and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.
19 12571(f)(1)(B)) is amended—

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

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

24 (iii) by adding at the end the fol-
25 lowing:

1 “(viii) 500,000 for each of fiscal years
2 2020 through 2022;”.

3 (B) REAUTHORIZATIONS.—

4 (i) AMERICORPS VISTA.—Section
5 501(a)(1) of the Domestic Volunteer Serv-
6 ice Act of 1973 (42 U.S.C. 5081(a)(1)) is
7 amended by striking “\$100,000,000 for
8 fiscal year 2010 and such sums as may be
9 necessary for each of the fiscal years 2011
10 through 2014” and inserting “such sums
11 as may be necessary for each of fiscal
12 years 2020 through 2022”.

13 (ii) AMERICORPS NCCC.—Section
14 501(a)(1)(A) of the National and Commu-
15 nity Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.
16 12681(a)(1)(A)) is amended—

17 (I) by striking clauses (i) and
18 (ii); and

19 (II) by striking “title I—” and
20 inserting “title I, such sums as may
21 be necessary for each of fiscal years
22 2020 through 2022.”.

23 (iii) AMERICORPS STATE AND NA-
24 TIONAL VOLUNTEERS.—Section 501(a)(2)
25 of the National and Community Service

1 Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)(2)) is
2 amended by striking “2010 through 2014”
3 and inserting “2020 through 2022”.

4 (2) REQUIREMENT.—To fulfill the purposes of
5 subsection (a), the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS
6 shall expedite the recruitment and selection of volun-
7 teers for an assignment described in subsection (a)
8 who are—

9 (A) unemployed veterans;

10 (B) individuals who become unemployed or
11 underemployed as a result of the coronavirus
12 public health emergency; and

13 (C) AmeriCorps members, Peace Corps
14 volunteers and trainees, and United States Ful-
15 bright scholars, who have had their service
16 ended as a result of such emergency.

17 (3) ELIGIBILITY.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any
19 other provision of law—

20 (i) any individual who is authorized to
21 work in the United States shall not be dis-
22 qualified from being recruited or selected
23 for any assignment described in subsection
24 (a) based solely on his or her citizenship
25 status; and

1 (ii) bankruptcy or poor credit deter-
2 mined by the Chief Executive Officer of
3 CNCS to be arising from the coronavirus
4 public health emergency shall not dis-
5 qualify any individual from being recruited
6 or selected for any assignment described in
7 subsection (a) based solely on such bank-
8 ruptcy or credit reporting.

9 (B) CLARIFICATION.—No individual de-
10 scribed in clause (i) or (ii) of subparagraph (A)
11 who is recruited or selected for an assignment
12 described in subsection (a) shall become dis-
13 qualified from continuing to serve in such as-
14 signment after the expiration of the period de-
15 scribed in subsection (a)(2) solely on the basis
16 of his or her citizenship or immigration status,
17 bankruptcy status, or credit score.

18 (c) BRIEFING TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 30
19 days after the date of enactment of this Act, and every
20 180 days thereafter, the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS
21 shall submit a report, to the Committee on Health, Edu-
22 cation, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Com-
23 mittee on Education and Labor of the House of Rep-
24 resentatives, on the operating plan of the CNCS to carry

1 out subsections (a) and (b), including the amendments
2 under subsection (b).

3 (d) ENHANCED STIPEND.—Section 105(b)(2)(A) of
4 the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (42 U.S.C.
5 4955(b)(2)(A)) is amended to read as follows:

6 “(A) beginning for fiscal year 2020, the min-
7 imum allowance is not less than an amount equal to
8 200 percent of the income official poverty line (as
9 defined by the Office of Management and Budget,
10 and revised annually in accordance with section
11 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act
12 (42 U.S.C. 9902(2))) applicable to a family of 1;
13 and”.

14 (e) CEILING ON STIPEND FOR GRANTEES.—Section
15 189 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990
16 (42 U.S.C. 12645c) is amended—

17 (1) in subsection (a), by striking “\$18,000”
18 and inserting “\$25,000”; and

19 (2) in subsection (e)(1), by striking “\$19,500”
20 and inserting “\$30,000”.

21 (f) WAIVER OF MATCHING FUNDS REQUIRE-
22 MENTS.—Section 189A of the National and Community
23 Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12645d) is amended—

24 (1) in the section heading, by inserting “;
25 **MATCHING FUNDS DURING CORONAVIRUS PUB-**

1 **LIC HEALTH EMERGENCY**” after **“COMMU-**
2 **NITIES**”;

3 (2) by redesignating subsection (b) as sub-
4 section (c); and

5 (3) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-
6 lowing:

7 **“(b) COVID–19 RESPONSE.—**Notwithstanding any
8 other provision of law, an entity that receives newly award-
9 ed assistance, or previously awarded assistance still within
10 the period of performance for such assistance, from the
11 Corporation for any program under the national service
12 laws (including a State Commission and an entity receiv-
13 ing subgrant funds) during the coronavirus public health
14 emergency, as defined in section 4(g) of the Undertaking
15 National Initiatives to Tackle Epidemic Act of 2020, shall
16 not be subject to any requirements to provide matching
17 funds for any such program, and the Federal share of
18 such assistance for a recipient (including for a State Com-
19 mission and a subgrant recipient) shall be 100 percent.”.

20 **(g) CORONAVIRUS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DE-**
21 **FINED.—**In this section, the term “coronavirus public
22 health emergency” means the public health emergency de-
23 clared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services
24 under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42

1 U.S.C. 247d) on January 31, 2020, with respect to
2 COVID–19.

3 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION FOR SURGE CAPACITY FOR FED-**
4 **ERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—For fiscal years 2020 through
6 2022 and subject to the appropriation of funds, the Ad-
7 ministrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agen-
8 cy shall appoint, administer, and expedite the training of
9 an additional 62,000 Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery
10 Employees, under the Response and Recover Directorate
11 (referred to in this section as “CORE employees”) under
12 the Office of Response and Recovery, above the level of
13 such employees in fiscal year 2019, to address the
14 coronavirus public health emergency and other disasters
15 and public emergencies.

16 (b) DETAIL OF CORE EMPLOYEES.—A CORE em-
17 ployee may be detailed, through mutual agreement and on
18 a nonreimbursable basis, to any Federal agency or to a
19 State, local, or Tribal government to fulfill an assignment
20 consistent with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and
21 Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.), in-
22 cluding—

23 (1) providing logistical support for the supply
24 chain of medical equipment and other goods involved
25 in COVID–19 response efforts;

1 (2) facilitating COVID–19 testing and surveil-
2 lance activities;

3 (3) tracing contacts of infected individuals and
4 the status of the individuals while being quar-
5 antined;

6 (4) providing nutritional assistance to vulner-
7 able populations; and

8 (5) carrying out other disaster preparedness
9 and response functions for other emergencies and
10 natural disasters.

11 (c) REQUIREMENT.—As soon as practicable, the Ad-
12 ministrators of the Federal Emergency Management Agen-
13 cy shall make public job announcements to fill the CORE
14 employee positions authorized under subsection (a), which
15 shall prioritize hiring from among the following groups of
16 individuals:

17 (1) Unemployed veterans.

18 (2) Individuals who have become unemployed or
19 underemployed as a result of the coronavirus public
20 health emergency.

21 (3) AmeriCorps members, Peace Corps volun-
22 teers and trainees, and United States Fulbright
23 Scholars who have had their service terms ended as
24 a result of the coronavirus public health emergency.

1 (4) Recent graduates of public health, medical,
2 nursing, social work, or related health-services pro-
3 grams.

4 (d) HIRING.—The Administrator of the Federal
5 Emergency Management Agency shall—

6 (1) hire the employees authorized under this
7 section in accordance with section 306(b)(1) of the
8 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency
9 Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5149(b)(1)); and

10 (2) use relevant statutory authority in effect on
11 the day before the date of enactment of this Act to
12 allow regional offices and site managers to advertise
13 for and hire employees under this section.

14 (e) TRAINING.—The Administrator of the Federal
15 Emergency Management Agency may make appropriate
16 adjustments to the standard training course curriculum
17 for employees under this section to include on-site
18 trainings at regional offices of the Federal Emergency
19 Management Agency, virtual trainings, or trainings con-
20 ducted by other Federal, State, local, or Tribal agencies
21 to fulfill functions described in subsection (b).

22 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
23 are authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator of
24 the Federal Emergency Management Agency
25 \$6,500,000,000, for each of fiscal years 2020, 2021, and

1 2022, of which not less than \$1,500,000,000 may be used
2 each fiscal year for the administrative costs associated
3 with carrying out this section.

4 (g) ELIGIBILITY FOR HIRING.—Notwithstanding any
5 other provision of law, for the purposes of hiring employ-
6 ees under this section—

7 (1) any individual who is authorized to work in
8 the United States shall not be disqualified for ap-
9 pointment to a position under this section based
10 solely on his or her citizenship status; and

11 (2) bankruptcy or poor credit determined by the
12 Administrator of the Federal Emergency Manage-
13 ment Agency to be arising from the coronavirus pub-
14 lic health emergency shall not disqualify any indi-
15 vidual for appointment to a position under this sec-
16 tion.

17 (h) ELECTIONS.—Section 403 of the Robert T. Staf-
18 ford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42
19 U.S.C. 5170b) is amended—

20 (1) in subsection (a)(3)(D) by striking the sub-
21 paragraph and inserting the following:

22 “(D) provision of temporary or supple-
23 mentary facilities for schools, official govern-
24 ment polling places, and other essential commu-
25 nity services;”; and

1 (2) in subsection (d)(1)—

2 (A) in subparagraph (A)(ii) by striking
3 “or” at the end;

4 (B) in subparagraph (B) by striking the
5 period at the end and inserting “; or”; and

6 (C) by adding at the end the following new
7 subparagraph:

8 “(C) stipends for temporary workers of the
9 State, tribal, or local government conducting
10 nonpartisan official election poll worker serv-
11 ices.”.

12 (i) COORDINATION.—The Federal Emergency Man-
13 agement Agency shall implement this Act and the amend-
14 ments made by this Act in coordination with the Secretary
15 of Health and Human Services, the Director of the Cen-
16 ters for Disease Control and Prevention, and other Fed-
17 eral agencies as determined appropriate.

18 (j) CORONAVIRUS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DE-
19 FINED.—In this section, the term “coronavirus public
20 health emergency” has the meaning given the term in sec-
21 tion 4(g).

○