

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 15, 2019

Ms. Barbara Stewart  
Chief Executive Officer  
Corporation for National and Community Service  
250 E Street SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Ms. Stewart:

As Members of Congress who are deeply committed to promoting national service and supporting the volunteers and stakeholder organizations in their service to our nation, we write to express our strong opposition to the decision by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to close all state and territorial offices. We urge you to immediately suspend the closing of state and territorial offices and instead actively engage with Congress and stakeholders – grantees, volunteers, and communities – to develop a modernization plan that reflects stakeholder input, real local needs, and strengthens national service for the future.

We are committed to a strong and effective national service program. Therefore, it is important to put this effort to shutdown state and territorial offices in context. One year ago, you submitted to Congress a budget justification for Fiscal Year 2019 that stated: ***“the Budget proposes to eliminate CNCS, returning responsibility to fund national service and volunteerism to the private and nonprofit sectors.”***

In June 2018, despite efforts to eliminate the agency, you announced a *“Transformation and Sustainability Plan”* for CNCS. And, in late 2018, the decision was made public to close all state and territorial offices, replacing them with eight regional offices, after little or no consultation with stakeholders or Congress. The development of this plan and the reorganization lacks transparency and fails to identify the budgetary impacts.

Last September, Congress – Republicans and Democrats – ignored the effort to eliminate CNCS and instead passed an appropriation for Fiscal Year 2019 that provided \$1.083 billion for national service. The bipartisan commitment to CNCS and national service is clear; however, we expect transparency and accountability from your agency.

It is our view that the hastily developed plan to eliminate state and territorial offices (commencing this month) will not contribute to the success of national service, but rather undermine support for AmeriCorps and Senior Corps grantees and volunteers. Rather than increase efficiency, we are concerned this plan will take critical resources away from stakeholders. Strong local relationships have been forged over the last 25 plus years with state office staff being essential to understanding local needs, especially in underserved rural communities, tribal communities, and areas lacking consistent internet access. The *Transformation and Sustainability Plan* will cause these local relationships to erode and thus deplete the services offered by CNCS in many states.

This weakening of local relationships is not only contrary to the mission of CNCS, but also likely breaches statute. According to section 196(A) of the *National and Community Service Act of 1990* (PL 101-610): “*The Chief Executive Officer shall establish and maintain a decentralized field structure that provides for an office of the Corporation for each State. The office for a State shall be located in, or in reasonable proximity to, such State.*”

The *Transformation and Sustainability Plan*'s eight new regional offices likely breaches the statutory requirement and congressional intent of having a state office in “reasonable proximity” to stakeholders. For example, when Washington’s state office closes stakeholders will be forced to engage with a regional office in Los Angeles – approximately 1,100 miles. Comparatively, stakeholders in Bemidji, MN will be forced to engage with CNCS staff in Kansas City – more than 650 miles away. This distance and inevitable disconnect from local communities is simply unacceptable.

Over the years CNCS volunteers have impacted countless lives and directly improved thousands of communities across the country. The need for national service is more important than ever as our nation faces countless challenges that require uniquely local solutions and local action.

Any plan that drastically alters the scope and/or mission of CNCS must be implemented in consultation and coordination with Congress. For this reason, we urge you to immediately suspend the closing of state and territorial CNCS offices and work with Congress on how best to improve CNCS programming and the quality of national service.

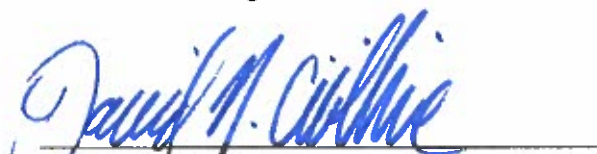
Sincerely,

  
BETTY MCCOLLUM  
Member of Congress

  
GWEN MOORE  
Member of Congress

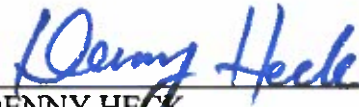
  
MARCY KAPTUR  
Member of Congress

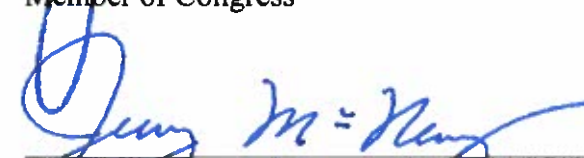
  
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON  
Member of Congress

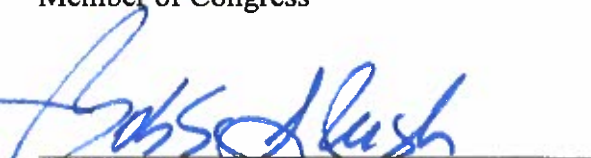
  
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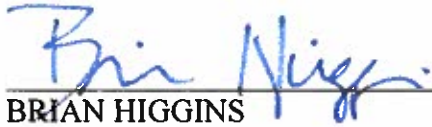
  
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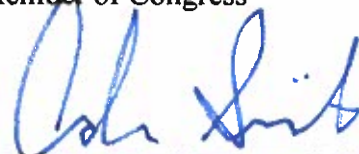
NANETTE BARRAGAN  
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BARBARA LEE  
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