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 SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Markey (for himself and Mr. Van Hollen) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

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.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-

ives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

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

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

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

(2) The Corporation for National and Community Service (referred to in this Act as “CNCS”), through the health, disaster, and poverty services administered by the CNCS under the 3 flagship AmeriCorps programs (AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps State and National Volunteers), is uniquely positioned to aid frontline workers and communities most impacted by the coronavirus public health emergency if the President of the United States fully mobilizes those 3 programs.
(3) The Federal Emergency Management Agency (referred to in this section as “FEMA”), tasked with leading aspects of the whole-of-government response to the coronavirus outbreak, is reportedly understaffed of those frontline workers that are essential to responding to the public health emergency.

(4) On March 15, 2020, the Peace Corps involuntarily ended the service of approximately 7,300 volunteers. Many of them acquired public health skills in countries abroad, which may also be applied to further service in AmeriCorps, service in FEMA, or continuing service in the Peace Corps once operations of the Peace Corps are to resume.

SEC. 3. SENSE OF THE SENATE.

It is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the President should fully utilize the competencies of the Federal Government workforce to battle the outbreak of coronavirus, the worst global health emergency the United States has faced in a century, as well as make available expanded opportunities for individuals in the United States desiring to serve their country in its time of need;

(2) the President should elevate the role of CNCS within the whole-of-government response to
the coronavirus outbreak, including by urging its Chief Executive Officer to—

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

(B) prioritize AmeriCorps grants that provide assistance to those most impacted by the coronavirus public health emergency and recruit the maximum number of volunteers authorized by law, particularly focusing on the recently unemployed;

(3) the United States should expand the Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees (CORE) program, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to enlist individuals in the United States to solve public health and supply-management challenges related to the coronavirus outbreak, as well as related to wildfires, hurricanes, and other disasters; and

(4) bolstering the number full-time positions at the Federal Emergency Management Agency will also expand national service opportunities for qualified individuals in the United States who have be-
come unemployed or underemployed as a result of
the coronavirus outbreak, including the approxi-
mately 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers whose service

SEC. 4. MOBILIZING PROGRAMS IN THE CORONAVIRUS
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY.

(a) PRIORITIZING CERTAIN AGREEMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any provi-
sion of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973
(42 U.S.C. 4950 et seq.) or the National and Com-
munity Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12501 et
seq.), the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS shall, for
the period described in paragraph (2), prioritize ex-
isting agreements, or enter into new agreements,
with public and private nonprofit organizations, in
consultation with the Secretary of Health and
Human Services, the Director of the Centers for
Disease Control and Prevention, the Administrator
of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and
State governments, that will direct volunteers in pro-
grams administered by CNCS to assignments that
assist those individuals most impacted by the
coronavirus public health emergency, including as-
signments—
(A) providing support services to veterans, homeless populations, the elderly, and other individuals who may be most vulnerable during the coronavirus public health emergency;

(B) supporting health care professionals and related positions;

(C) offering before- and after-school tutoring and instruction for children in low-income areas, including through remote learning;

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

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

(2) Period.—The period described in this paragraph—

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

(B) shall end—

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

(ii) not later than 2 years after the conclusion of such emergency.
(b) Authorization for Additional Recruitment of AmeriCorps Volunteers.—

(1) In general.—

(A) Increase in number of positions.—Section 121(f)(1)(B) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12571(f)(1)(B)) is amended—

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

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

   (iii) by adding at the end the following:

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

(B) Reauthorizations.—

   (i) AmeriCorps Vista.—Section 501(a)(1) of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (42 U.S.C. 5081(a)(1)) is amended by striking “$100,000,000 for fiscal year 2010 and such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years 2011 through 2014” and inserting “such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years 2020 through 2022”.
(ii) **AMERICORPS NCCC.**—Section 501(a)(1) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)(1)) is amended—

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

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

(iii) **AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS.**—Section 501(a)(2) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)(2)) is amended by striking “2010 through 2014” and inserting “2020 through 2022”.

(2) **REQUIREMENT.**—To fulfill the purposes of subsection (a), the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS shall expedite the recruitment and selection of volunteers who are—

(A) unemployed veterans;

(B) individuals who become unemployed or underemployed as a result of the coronavirus public health emergency; and
(C) AmeriCorps members, or Peace Corps volunteers, who have had their service ended as a result of such emergency.

(c) Briefing to Congress.—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, and every 180 days thereafter, the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS shall submit a report, to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives, on the operating plan of the CNCS to carry out subsections (a) and (b), including the amendments under subsection (b).

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

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

(e) Coronavirus Public Health Emergency Defined.—In this section, the term “coronavirus public
health emergency” means the public health emergency declared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d) on January 31, 2020, with respect to COVID-19.

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION FOR SURGE CAPACITY FOR FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY.

(a) In general.—The Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall appoint, administer, and expedite the training of an additional 10,000 Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees, under the Response and Recover Directorate (referred to in this section as “CORE employees”) under the Office of Response and Recovery, above the level of such employees in fiscal year 2019, to address the coronavirus public health emergency.

(b) Detail of CORE Employees.—A CORE employee may be detailed, through mutual agreement, to any Federal agency that is a participating agency in the White House Coronavirus Task Force, to fulfill an assignment for the Task Force, including—

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

(2) tracing contacts of infected individuals and their status while being quarantined;
(3) providing nutritional assistance to vulnerable populations; and

(4) administrative duties such as staffing call centers to disseminate public-health related information to the public.

(c) REQUIREMENT.—As soon as feasible, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall make public job announcements to fill the CORE employee positions authorized under subsection (a), which shall prioritize hiring from among the following groups of individuals:

(1) Unemployed veterans of the Armed Forces.

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

(3) AmeriCorps members, or Peace Corps Volunteers, who have had their service ended as a result of the coronavirus public health emergency.

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

(e) CORONAVIRUS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DEFINED.—In this section, the term “coronavirus public health emergency”...
health emergency’’ has the meaning given the term in section 4(e).

SEC. 6. PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER REENROLLMENT ELIGIBILITY AND TRANSITION ASSISTANCE.

(a) ASSISTANCE FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS WHOSE SERVICE ENDED INVOLUNTARILY.—Notwithstanding section 5 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504), with respect to all of the Peace Corps volunteers whose service ended involuntarily on March 15, 2020 (or earlier, in the case of volunteers who were serving China and Mongolia), when the Director of the Peace Corps suspended all volunteer operations due to the coronavirus public health emergency, the Director of the Peace Corps shall—

(1) continue to provide the health care described in section 5(e) of such Act to the volunteer during the 6-month period beginning on March 15, 2020, to supplement the benefits to which the volunteer is otherwise entitled under section 5 of such Act;

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

(3) expedite the medical clearance for such volunteer to facilitate reenrollment;
(4) permit the volunteer, to the extent possible, to resume the activity in which the volunteer had been serving at the time of his or her involuntarily end of service or any other activity, by mutual agreement; and

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

(b) **Report on Restart of Peace Corps Operations Following End of Public Health Emergency.**—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Peace Corps shall submit a report to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives that describes the efforts of the Peace Corps—

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

(2) to obtain approval from countries, as necessary, to return reenrolled volunteers to their previous assignments; and
(3) to identify the anticipated additional appropriations or new statutory authorities that would be necessary to achieve the goal of safely redeploying 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers during the 1-year period beginning on the date on which Peace Corps operations resume.