

October 29, 2019

To: The National Commission on Military, National and Public Service
2530 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000 Box 63
Arlington, VA 22202

We as members of the Mennonite Congregation of Boston are offering our strong support for your efforts to establish a coordination of service opportunities under a Commission of National Service. As Mennonites, an integral aspect of our faith has been to dedicate our lives in service to the needs of others and to foster communities of peace that can diminish those walls built by nationalism, racism, sexism and economic disparity. A significant number of our congregation have served in voluntary service programs to provide for material relief needs as well as medical, educational and other critical services within the United States and in many foreign countries. We can all attest to the satisfaction of having met some of these needs as well as the lasting effects on the growth of our personal lives in regard to our responsibilities in this world of such diverse peoples and their circumstances.

As Mennonites we have historically maintained a peace and non-resistance position and would recommend that many of the voluntary service programs would also qualify as an alternative service option for those who choose conscientious objector status in times of military conscription. We also recommend that these voluntary service programs be placed under civilian rather than military administration.

We would suggest that the National Service Commission eventually release a coordinated service program through all manner of social and printed media. A significant effort should be made to explain the personal and public benefits of voluntary service. We would further emphasize that those voluntary service programs should provide room, board, travel, a minimal stipend, educational loan deferment and mentoring support so that those with limited means, experience and training will not be excluded.

The value of voluntary service, especially among young people, can certainly provide a long lasting unifying effect among our various levels of social and intellectual levels particularly in these times as global diversities are increasingly affecting us more directly.

Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions.

Bruce Bradshaw, Pastor
Mennonite Congregation of Boston
1555 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02138