



March 14, 2018

Mr. Christopher Turpin
Acting Vice President
for News and Editorial Director
National Public Radio
1111 North Capitol Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

Sent by e-mail to cturpin@npr.org

Dear Mr. Turpin,

I write to you on behalf of Health Justice for Peace Corps Volunteers (HJPCV) with a formal request from this organization and the thousands of Peace Corps Volunteers it represents. HJPCV's mission is to advocate on behalf of sick and injured Volunteers to obtain the support and benefits to which we are entitled by law. Since our establishment as an NPCA-affiliated organization, we have heard from countless Volunteers who have become sick and injured from their Peace Corps service and are unable to access healthcare services, care, and treatment. HJPCV tirelessly advocates for Volunteers in the field and those who have returned from their service.

HJPCV condemns sexual assault and harassment and supports all survivors, and more specifically, Volunteers who have been unfortunately exposed to such experiences. Sexually harassed and assaulted Volunteers often contact us with requests for assistance surrounding recommended psychologists, completing and submitting Department of Labor (DOL) Federal Employee Compensation Act (FECA) forms, and accessing an understanding support group. HJPCV recognizes that the #MeToo movement has been a crucial political and historic movement to ensure that sexual harassment and assault are taken seriously in all professional environments, especially within Peace Corps.

S U P P O R T I N G T H O S E W H O S E R V E

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 healthjusticepeacecorpsvols@gmail.com

 <http://tinyurl.com/HealthJustice4PCVs>

As the Founder and Director of HJPCV, I have also heard from countless Volunteers who have suffered and continue to suffer from exposure to the anti-malarial prophylaxis, mefloquine, also known as Lariam. I and others in this group strive to support and assist them with understanding symptoms, suggesting ways to access medical care, and connecting them with others who are similarly affected. The resulting community of Volunteers who have been adversely affected by this drug has become one of the limited safe environments from which to discuss alarming symptoms, potential healthcare specialists, and treatment options. This story has the potential to positively influence the narrative surrounding the circumstances with which Volunteers are confronted when returning from service sick and injured and could create a broader community of support that is currently lacking.

When sick and injured Volunteers return from service, either prematurely or with a completed service record of over two years, there exists no official platform from which to hold Peace Corps accountable. As an example, in 2017, a Volunteer, with the support of five additional Volunteers and accompanying affidavits, filed a complaint with the Office of Special Counsel to instigate an official and neutral third-party investigation into Peace Corps' use of mefloquine. This request to access an independent investigation was denied as Returned Volunteers are not considered former federal employees. Beyond this rejection, several other actions were taken to hold Peace Corps accountable to no avail.

Fortunately, this NPR story has been developed and exists as a mechanism with which to hold Peace Corps, a federal agency, accountable for the health, safety, and security of Volunteers in the field and upon return from service. HJPCV's understanding is that the allegations against the reporter do not extend to the substance nor creation of this important story and the potential platform this story could create for sick and injured Volunteers who selflessly and patriotically serve their country. The potential influence of this story to save the life of just one Volunteer and raise awareness related to the health, safety, and security of all Volunteers largely outweighs the unfortunate set of circumstances that surround this story. HJPCV unequivocally would like to have this story air unadulterated in its current form as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

/electronically signed/

Dr. Nancy E. Tongue
RPCV, Chile 1980 – 1982
Founder and Director of
Health Justice for Peace Corps Volunteers
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