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Honorable Dr. Joseph Heck:

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I am very thankful and pleased with the initiative and the work of the Commission on Military, National and Public Service. We have the hope of giving our youth the opportunity to provide public service to our country and strengthen our democracy.

As you well know, not all our youth have the same opportunities growing up. Many of them were born into poverty, dysfunctional families and others without good health care or good chances to learn. The Military Services have provided great training and opportunities for our youth over the years.

Mandatory Public Service will attract many idealistic youngsters with good mental and emotional preparation, as well many others with emotional scars and significant academic and social deficits. Those scars and deficits become impediments to functioning under the stresses of daily interactions and demands. For those reasons we should provide the candidates for public service a training program, with some of the lessons learned from the military.

I am enclosing my thoughts for a training program for the candidates to public service. I am a believer that public service will be especially good for those young Americans.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emilio J. Dominguez, M.D." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

Emilio J. Dominguez, M.D.

A NATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC SERVICE FOR POST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." President John F. Kennedy

There is a National recognition that we must help our youth get more engaged with our civil society for their own sake as well as that of our society and their future. Their voter participation rates are lower in younger citizens. From 1972 to 2012, citizens 18-29 years old turned out at a rate 15 to 20 points lower than citizens 30 years and older. Why?

What are some of the elements of this question?

Perhaps psychological problems are a factor. In 1976, Rutter reported that "almost one-half of the adolescents interviewed acknowledged having considerable misery and anguish". In 1982 Robbins et al. "reported a diagnosis of major depressive disorder in 28% of the adolescents they screened". "Strober et al. (1981) found a prevalence rate of 18.7%". Depression and suicide keeps soaring. In 2016 the CDC reported 5723 suicides in the age group 15-24. "Youth suicide also has increased because of an increased use of firearms". From the 1970s to the early 1990s, the homicide rate for teens (ages 15 to 19) more than doubled, from 8 per 100,000 in 1970 to a peak of 20 per 100,000 in 1993. The rate declined steeply during the late 1990s, then leveled off at around 9 deaths per 100,000 from 2000 to 2004. The rate of homicides among this age group then increased, reaching 11 per 100,000 in 2006, before falling to 7 per 100,000 in 2014, the lowest rate on record. However, rates have increased again over the last few years, rising to 9 per 100,000 in 2016.

Substance abuse continues to soar. The opioid epidemic is getting worse by the day, with increasing mortalities. With increasing legalization of marijuana, we are running the risk of many teenagers becoming serious chronic cannabis drug abusers. This will have a negative effect on their developing brain. Nearly 150,000 college students develop some type of alcohol-related health problem every year. The binge-drinking rate among college students

has hovered above 40 percent for two decades, and signs are that partying is getting even harder.

During the freshman year of college, 15% of women are raped while incapacitated from alcohol or drugs. It's hard to imagine a more sobering statistic. Separation anxiety from leaving home, leads many teenagers to sexual promiscuity as well as sexual violence.

According to the CDC, obesity in our young population is increasing at an alarming rate, with all the negative medical, social and psychological consequences.

Learning disabilities, such as Dyslexia, is found in 3-7% of the population; however, about 20% of the population have some degree of symptoms.

Another factor impacting post high school teens might be the lack of boundaries, clear structures, and supervision that get many of them in more trouble that they can handle, especially when they lack the necessary competencies to master the challenges facing them.

Many of the problems mentioned above may not have been identified in their schools, or if they were identified, they were not corrected due to the lack of school resources. All of these issues and many others are all good grounds to move forward to find a way to develop a Mandatory National Public Service Program after high school. These issues can be identified and corrective processes can then be initiated. It could give the teenagers an opportunity to develop new masteries and ability to adapt with a sense of new self-confidence that will go a long way to initiate a process of self-recovery.

Public concern with all these youth problems may create a sense of urgency for a Public National Service Program. It is of interest to know that a CNN survey done on 1/26/2019 by Mr. Smerconish showed that people were 71% in favor of such a National Public Service Program. The teenagers' interest in such a program would increase with the possibility of earning wages during that year of service.

After leaving their homes, why are the teens so vulnerable?

Leaving the nest has always been stressful and dangerous for every living animal. You can observe the struggles of birds leaving the nest for the first time. They practice flapping their wings over and over until they get the courage to jump into the empty space. Unfortunately, some of them will fail to master their first flight and become prey to predators.

Separation anxiety is a phenomenon also found in animals and observed by many mothers. You can see how some dogs that cannot tolerate to be away from their masters will have significant reactions such as: severe crying, barking and damaging furniture.

In children, separation anxiety disorders may lead later on to over anxious disorders or avoidance disorders of adolescence. All these clinical syndromes leave the teenagers handicapped socially and psychologically with low self-esteem and many fears to venture into any new undertakings.

Other teenagers are raised in families that over indulge them. They grow up with a sense that the world and every person will continue giving them what they want. When they don't get it, they will get very angry, and being narcissistic as they are, they will do anything to get what they had demanded. They do not feel they need to struggle to get their way. Somebody will do it for them.

Many teenagers are ill prepared to face the world by themselves away from home without full parental support. And as they fail, they may join with bad people (predators) that may get them in worse troubles. As they become consumed with their insecurities and fears, they may even cling to "rescuers" and fall into cults.

The main psychological issues restraining adolescents from becoming successful adults and fully participative in our Civil Society are the lack of a commitment to a dream, and a pervasive sense of hopelessness based on their own personal experiences. They live in the present, unable to see a future, lacking a trust in human connections.

Can the experiences in a well-run National Public Service Program change the outlook of those teenagers? I think so, because deep down teenagers are resilient, idealistic, curious and hungry for new experiences and healthier relationships. After all, Public Service is good Medicine for the Soul.

Alternatives for Public Service available for post high school graduates:

AmeriCorps - Youth Build - City Year

Teach Corps for America - Peace Corps

A National Public Service Program to train teens for public service

- 1) Three months of Federal modified "boot camp" with emphasis on improving health, fitness and education.
 - a) The expectations during these 3 months will be to identify health, educational and competency problems and correct them as much as possible.
 - b) Improve the fitness of each trainee.
 - c) Improve and establish healthy routines and discipline.
 - d) Improve verbal communication with frequent small mixed groups and individual presentations. Group discussions could include national and international issues. Conversations should also include experiences with the program and personal dreams they have or should have for their future.
 - e) Every one should know how to swim, play chess and learn meditation and relaxation techniques. Every one should also participate in at least one team sport.
 - f) Trainees with learning deficits will be provided with an intensive remediation program.

- g) Trainees that do well can be provided with the opportunity to learn new languages.
 - h) All trainees will learn basic emergency first aid.
 - i) Smart phones, tablets and personal TV will not be allowed, to discourage isolation and promote human interaction and social skills.
 - j) By teaching them good manners, good habits, and basic social etiquette norms, teens will be more successful in their public service assignment and in their future.
 - k) Religious services will be available.
 - l) No home visits during these 3 months. Parents and siblings may have short visits once a month on Sundays.
- 2) Nine months internships in Federal or State Agencies or qualified Not for Profit Organization or Tribal Government
- a) The agencies will have to meet national employment criteria with clear supervision guidelines for the candidates, as well as pay them the national wage.
 - b) The trainees can apply to any agency of their choosing, but to be accepted, they will have to meet the standards of that facility, as well as available openings.
 - c) If the trainees fail to fulfill their contract with the agency, they will have to go back to an available "boot camp" for additional retraining.
- 3) Colleges that can demonstrate that their curriculum meets the standards of the Mandatory one Year of Public Service will fulfill the requirements of the National Public Service Program.
- a) Students in Colleges that are not participating in the Mandatory Public Service Programs and doing well

academically and socially have the option of a direct one year public service after graduation.

- b) College students that violate the college ethical conduct, or show continuous academic failures, will be referred to the first "boot camp" available in a Public Service Training Facility.
- c) College students graduating with student loans will be given the opportunity to have their loans forgiven for working in public service careers for several years.

References:

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Lizabeth Craig, R.N., B.S.Ed