



**SERVE OHIO**  
Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism

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## **Ohio House of Representatives – Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education March 15, 2017**

Good afternoon Chairman Cupp and members of the committee. My name is William Hall and I serve as the Executive Director of the Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism, which is more commonly known as ServeOhio. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you this afternoon to discuss our work.

The mission of ServeOhio is to *Strengthen Ohio Communities through AmeriCorps and Volunteer Engagement*. AmeriCorps is the signature program of the Commission. AmeriCorps programs provide opportunities for Americans to make an intensive commitment to serve their communities as “AmeriCorps Members” in projects developed at the local level to address locally-defined problems. Federal law requires, as a condition for receipt of federal AmeriCorps funding, that a state service commission be maintained to administer the program, ensuring each state the opportunity to coordinate AmeriCorps with its own programmatic priorities. The Commission is governed by a board of 21 members. Four members are representatives of state agencies (Department of Education, Department of Aging, Department of Youth Services and the Department of Higher Education); 15 are appointed by the governor; and the Chairs of the Senate and House Education Committees (Senator Peggy Lehner and Representative Andrew Brenner). The Commission presently employs seven full-time employees.

The budget request before you will allow us to maintain our core operations. Federal regulations require that state service commission operations be funded under a 50-50 cost share between the state and the federal government; federal operating appropriations are limited to an amount equal to the state contribution. State general revenue funds are only utilized to support the roles and responsibilities of the Commission; federal funds support all AmeriCorps programmatic activity. AmeriCorps continues to be a strong investment for the State of Ohio as the state currently receives \$23 in federal funds for every state dollar invested.

It is the role of the Commission to award, administer and monitor the funds supporting AmeriCorps Members and the service activities in which the AmeriCorps Members are engaged. Each year the Commission operates two AmeriCorps grant competitions (Spring and Fall); providing local and statewide organizations (nonprofit, governmental, faith-based) the opportunity to apply for AmeriCorps funds to meet local needs. The Commission awards AmeriCorps grants in the areas of education; economic opportunity; healthy futures; environmental stewardship; and capacity building. AmeriCorps programs must define specific, quantifiable objectives that will be achieved and submit quarterly progress reports to the Commission. Proactive onsite financial and programmatic monitoring by Commission staff ensures compliance with federal grants management regulations, achievement of programmatic objectives, and intervention and assistance in the event of non-compliance or under-performance. Most importantly, ServeOhio works with local communities to develop AmeriCorps programming to tackle critical issues while providing invaluable opportunities for local residents to serve.

In our current AmeriCorps portfolio, the Commission awarded \$6.7 million to support over 800 AmeriCorps Members who will provide over 1.1 million hours of intensive service at 482 sites across the state. Education continues to be the top funding priority for the Commission – in the current program year, we are investing \$4.1 million to increase academic success. ServeOhio mobilizes hundreds of AmeriCorps Members as tutors,

coaches, mentors and teachers – helping students succeed throughout the entire education continuum – from kindergarten readiness to college access and completion.

- At program sites in Columbus and Cleveland, 28 AmeriCorps Members are working in distressed communities to improve school readiness and early literacy by working with young children and their parents to increase first-learning opportunities and family engagement. In the current program year alone, these AmeriCorps Members will provide progressive literacy interventions to over 900 preschool youth. *(Community Properties of Ohio Impact Corporation/CPO Building Blocks; Horizon Education Centers/HEC Family Engagement)*
- 140 Ohio Reading Corps and Ohio Math Corps Members are placed across the state – providing individualized and small group interventions to over 2,300 K -5 students who are not meeting grade-level proficiency standards in reading or math. Last year, over 1,250 K-3 students met grade-level proficiency and/or made more than one year of progress working with Ohio Reading Corps AmeriCorps Members. *(Educational Service Center of Central Ohio/Ohio Reading Corps, Ohio Math Corps)*
- 116 AmeriCorps Members in Dayton, Columbus and Cleveland serve within mentoring organizations and public schools to increase academic success, reduce chronic absenteeism and improve graduation rates by enhancing school climate and providing individualized student support. Last year, AmeriCorps Members from these programs provided intensive mentoring to over 1,500 students – increasing individual attendance rates, as well as, social and emotional well-being. *(Sinclair Community College/Mentoring Collaborative of Montgomery County AmeriCorps; City Year Columbus; City Year Cleveland)*
- 50 AmeriCorps Members are working in rural and urban communities to provide the direct academic and skill support necessary for individual students to develop specific, sustainable career goals that will allow them to remain in their local community. In the current program year, AmeriCorps Members will provide nearly 3,000 students – mostly from rural communities – with career planning support. *(Northeast Ohio Medical University/Corps for Rural Success and Health; College Now Greater Cleveland/AmeriCorps Career Coaches)*
- Statewide, 70 AmeriCorps Members are serving with local schools and college access organizations to provide college advising and career mentoring to over 12,500 students in low-wealth school districts. AmeriCorps Member service activities include assistance with completing financial aid documents, reviewing college application materials, and researching scholarship opportunities for individual students. In the last completed program year, AmeriCorps Members served over 15,000 students in grades 6-10 and nearly 11,000 students in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades – helping the students craft age-appropriate career and college plans. *(College Now Greater Cleveland/Ohio College Guides)*
- 35 AmeriCorps Members are placed on 14 community college campuses across the state to serve over 7,000 students – helping individual students achieve higher levels of course completion and higher credit hour accumulation rates in progression to their attainment of postsecondary credentials. Last year, AmeriCorps Members supported over 3,700 community college students in the completion of development education credits; coached students earned roughly 70% of the developmental education credits they attempted which is a significantly higher rate than non-coached students. *(Ohio Association of Community Colleges/AmeriCorps College Completion Coaches)*

But AmeriCorps is not only a service program – it is also a workforce development program. Ohio AmeriCorps Members in the current program year will receive over 137,000 hours of professional development – learning valuable workplace skills and, in many cases, earning specific workforce credentials. A full-time AmeriCorps Member serves a minimum of 1,700 hours over a 10 – 12 month period. AmeriCorps Members receive a modest living stipend during their term and an education award upon successful completion of their service. The education award is equal to the current Pell grant and can be utilized for future higher education pursuits or to pay off qualified student loans. Education awards earned by Ohio AmeriCorps Members in the current program year will exceed \$3.9 million. Through this combination of intensive service, professional development and higher education resources – AmeriCorps is a fundamental strategy that advances individuals, local communities and the state of Ohio.

As the Commission on Service and Volunteerism, ServeOhio also retains a broader mission to expand and strengthen volunteer engagement in Ohio. The Commission administers a private-public partnership called Stewards of Service, which increases the capacity of local volunteer mobilizers. The Stewards of Service initiative includes project funds for national days of service such as MLK Day, Global Youth Service Day, and Make A Difference Day. In the most recent funding cycle, over \$18,000 was awarded to support 21 service projects that engaged nearly 3,600 community volunteers in over 12,000 hours of local service. While limited in scope and scale when compared to our AmeriCorps programming, these funds serve a vital role in enabling local, grassroots organizations to complete projects that ultimately benefit thousands of Ohioans. Stewards of Service also provides support for the annual Ohio Conference on Service and Volunteerism which provides comprehensive professional development in the field of volunteer administration, as well as, the Commission’s annual ServeOhio Awards which recognize outstanding volunteer achievement throughout the state.

The Commission has consistently proven to be a good steward of public funds – realigning staff and leveling operating expenses to maximize our state support in the most cost-effective manner. With your continued support, ServeOhio will be well-positioned to sustain our commitment to advance high-quality AmeriCorps programming and volunteer engagement in Ohio.

Thank you for your support and this opportunity to share this overview of the Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism. We would be happy to respond to any questions at this time.