

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Lisa Chambers, and I am here to testify on behalf of TECH CORPS, a national non-profit organization, headquartered here in Columbus, that was founded in 1995. Our mission is to develop a more technologically literate society, in which all K-12 students have equal access to technology programs, resources, and skills to enrich their education today and prepare them for college or career tomorrow.

TECH CORPS is the longest-operating technology education nonprofit organization in the United States and boasts a successful history of serving students with quality STEM learning experiences. For over 27 years we have formed intentional partnerships with copious school districts, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, corporations, and foundations to deliver much-needed technology resources to K-12 students and teachers. During this time, we have developed rigorous, evolving curriculum and deployed over 20,000 tech-savvy volunteers to implement programming.

In 2022 alone, TECH CORPS delivered 130 programs and distributed 3,100 Computer Science learning kits to nearly 6,000, K-12 students in seven states and provided computer science curriculum and professional development to 79 elementary school teachers in nine states. Nearly 150 technology professionals volunteered with TECH CORPS. We also gauge success by the individual achievements of the students we serve. In 2022, TECH CORPS employed seven former participants as part-time instructors, welcomed six as near-peer mentors at our 2022 Hackathon, and helped to transition two program graduates into internships with corporate partners.

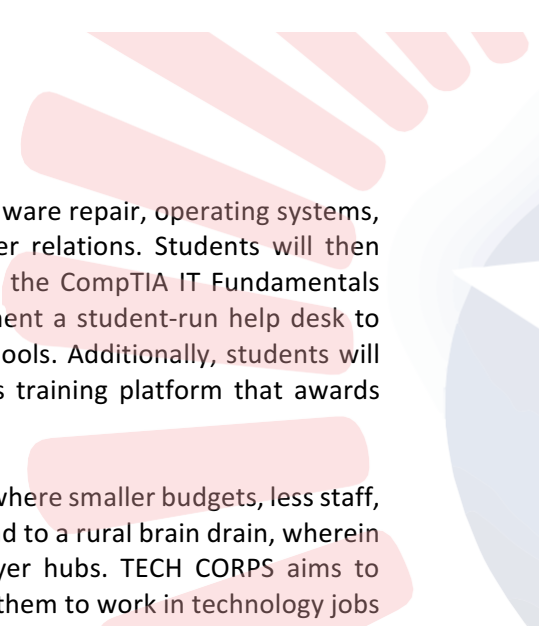
I am here today to request that the Ohio Senate reinstate the House recommendation of \$125,000 in FY24 and \$330,000 in FY25 for TECH CORPS to provide technical training for rural high school students focusing on the middle-skill information technology pathway under the Student TECH CORPS program.

The goal of this funding request is to expand the delivery of core technology training and industry-recognized certification to 1,000 high school students by training 40 teachers over the biennium, with a particular focus on students in rural communities.

Research has shown that computer science is less accessible in rural schools than their suburban and urban counterparts, therefore offering less exposure to technology-focused skills. As these skills have emerged as a fast track to high-paying, in-demand jobs in Ohio, we cannot afford to leave behind this population of Ohio students and our future workforce.

To address this issue, TECH CORPS proposes to offer Student TECH CORPS, a proven program that delivers technical training and experiences necessary for high school students to be ready for college or career, with a focus on the middle-skill information technology pathway. This program includes four components:

- 1) Basic Technology Training
- 2) CompTIA Testing and Certification
- 3) Student-Run Help Desk
- 4) Accenture's Skills to Succeed



Basic Technology Training consists of 120 hours of online training in hardware repair, operating systems, software applications, networking, computer peripherals, and customer relations. Students will then undergo performance-based testing of their knowledge, culminating in the CompTIA IT Fundamentals exam. They will have all the capabilities needed to successfully implement a student-run help desk to support and complement existing technology infrastructure in their schools. Additionally, students will have access to Accenture's Skills to Succeed, an online work-readiness training platform that awards digital badges.

We are specifically targeting students living in Ohio's rural communities, where smaller budgets, less staff, and fewer higher education and employer partners in their region can lead to a rural brain drain, wherein capable students leave their communities for opportunities in employer hubs. TECH CORPS aims to prevent this by introducing rural students to career pathways that allow them to work in technology jobs without leaving their communities.

In Year 1, we will recruit up to 10 high schools in rural communities and provide professional development, curriculum, and program materials to implement Student TECH CORPS with up to 250 students (25 students per high school). In Year 2, the Year 1 high schools will continue implementing Student TECH CORPS with a new group of up to 250 students. We will also recruit up to 20 new high schools in rural communities to implement the program with up to 500 students.

I would like to thank the DeWine Administration and the General Assembly for your focus on workforce development, especially in STEM fields. Early exposure and access to computer science education provide students with economic opportunities in high-earning careers, and we applaud you for your recognition and attention to it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.