

## Ohio Senate – Senate Education Committee

May 6, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Brenner, Ranking Minority Member Ingram 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. We appreciate the opportunity to come before you today to discuss our mission and work.

Established in 1994, ServeOhio is charged with administering AmeriCorps programs and supporting volunteer engagement in Ohio. Federal legislation ensures that states have a key role in determining the allocation of national service resources via state service commissions. ServeOhio functions as Ohio's state service commission.

### **AMERICORPS**

One of the commission's primary roles is the funding and administration of AmeriCorps programs in Ohio. ServeOhio makes AmeriCorps local by working with Ohio communities to define critical needs and develop AmeriCorps programming as an intervention to address those needs. In addition, ServeOhio sets policy and program priorities; competitively awards grants to local organizations; provides training and technical assistance to program staff and AmeriCorps Members; monitors and evaluates grantees to prevent fraud, waste and abuse; ensures quality and compliance with federal and state laws.

AmeriCorps provides opportunities for Americans to make an intensive commitment to serve their communities as AmeriCorps "members" in projects developed to address locally defined problems. ServeOhio supports AmeriCorps programs that increase academic achievement, expand economic opportunity, and improve health and environmental conditions. A fulltime AmeriCorps Member serves 1,700 hours within a 10-to-12-month service term – earning a modest living allowance and education award upon successful completion. ***In the current biennium, ServeOhio is providing over \$25 million in grant funds to support nearly 2,000 AmeriCorps Members who will provide over two million hours of service at 500 service sites across Ohio.***

ServeOhio will invest \$15 million in AmeriCorps funding on education programming – serving over 25,000 students in PreK – 12 settings. AmeriCorps members provide a continuum of service from early childhood school readiness to college and career access. The bulk of our members provide service in local schools – targeting improved academic performance (Ohio Reading and Math Corps/Breakthrough Cincinnati/Shawnee State University/Teach for America) and increasing academic engagement (City Year Columbus/City Year Cleveland/Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers/Zoological Society of Cincinnati). All our programs share the primary goal of increasing student interest in learning by providing one-on-one and small group support to further individual academic goals.

In addition to providing intensive service, AmeriCorps is a proven workforce development strategy – providing a pathway to employment for thousands of Ohioans over the past 30 years. In a recent exit survey, over 85% of members indicated that their service experience furthered their professional goals. ***This service year alone, Ohio AmeriCorps Members will receive over 100,000 hours of professional development and earn over \$4.3 million in education awards that can be used for post-secondary education or qualified student loans.***

## **VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT**

ServeOhio also works to increase the quantity and quality of community volunteer engagement across the state by providing resources and professional development. We work directly with volunteer program administrators at nonprofit, government, and community organizations to provide them with the tools and skills they need to strategically engage volunteers.

Our National Days of Service Project Grants – MLK Day (January), Global Youth Service Day (April), ServeOhio Day (June) and Make A Difference Day (October) – provides support to over 100 community projects that engage thousands of volunteers each year. In addition, our Get Connected portal connects volunteers and organizations; organizations can post volunteer opportunities to recruit individuals and individuals can access opportunities that best fit their interests.

Research clearly demonstrates that youth who volunteer have improved academic achievement with higher grades, increased motivation and an elevated attitude towards school. Positive longterm outcomes for students are also noted with improved physical and mental health; increased self-esteem which leads to stronger social ties and reduced isolation; and more community involvement in adulthood. ServeOhio hosts a platform that is specifically tailored to youth service – allowing schools and community organizations to share opportunities while tracking engagement analytics that will provide students a transcript of their service activities to utilize in future employment, and higher education applications. ServeOhio also supports a Youth Service Toolkit with approximately 50 plug-and-play service projects that can be adapted to different grade levels and student interests.

We know that effective volunteer management is both a science and an art. ServeOhio provides ongoing professional development to strengthen the capacity of organizations to recruit, train, manage and retain volunteers. In the biennium, over 1,000 volunteer professionals will have participated in our six-week Volunteer Engagement Fundamentals course, Volunteer Center Community of Practice, and the ServeOhio Conference on Service and Volunteerism. ***Volunteerism is a key measurement of our state's civic well-being. Over 2.8 million Ohioans volunteered in their local communities each year – providing 182 million hours of service with an economic impact of more than \$5.7 billion.***

## **BUDGET**

ServeOhio is primarily funded by our federal grantor – the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). All AmeriCorps program funding originates at CNCS; such funds are distributed to state service commissions through a combination of formula and competitive processes. In addition, CNCS provides funding to ServeOhio to support the development and administration of AmeriCorps programming via the Commission Support Grant and Commission Investment Fund.

We are supportive of the state budget as introduced (\$731,407 in FY26 and \$747,115 in FY27). The increases afforded to ServeOhio will meet our mandated federal administrative match and maintain current operations. The decreases represented in the House version of the budget will have an immediate impact on our work and require a reduction in staff. ServeOhio represents a good financial investment for the state – consistently returning over \$25 in federal funding for every state dollar expended. But most importantly ServeOhio programming represents an effective strategy in addressing critical issues and building civic engagement.

Thank you for your continued support of national service and volunteer engagement in Ohio. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to share this overview of our work and would be happy to respond to any questions at this time.