



Senate Finance Committee Testimony

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Lisa Chambers, Chief Executive Officer, TECH CORPS

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Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Lisa Chambers, and I am the Chief Executive Director of TECH CORPS, a nonprofit organization dedicated to closing the opportunity gap in technology education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Amended Substitute House Bill 96.

For 30 years, TECH CORPS has been providing K-12 students with meaningful, career-connected programs. These meaningful learning experiences build essential skills, increase confidence, and expand opportunities that unlock the door to a successful future.

Over the past decade, TECH CORPS has directly impacted nearly 25,000 students and 550 educators, with the support of over 2,000 technology professionals as volunteers.

I am here today in support of TECH CORPS' operating budget request for Fiscal Years 2026-2027, specifically for the expansion of our Student TECH CORPS program into rural and small communities across Ohio.

Ohio's industries are increasingly reliant on technology and artificial intelligence, leading to a growing demand for skilled technology professionals. The U.S. Department of Labor projects a 15% growth in technology-related occupations from 2021 to 2031, creating nearly 683,000 new jobs nationwide. Over a quarter of jobs now require "highly digital" skills, and two-thirds of the 15 fastest-growing jobs are computer science or AI-related. Here in Ohio, JobsOhio estimates that the state will continue to experience a widening tech talent gap of 11,000 positions annually through 2031.

Despite these opportunities, many students, particularly those in rural and small-town communities, lack access to high-quality technology education. Rural schools are less likely to offer computer science classes or technology clubs, limiting students' exposure to potential tech careers. Consequently, rural areas, which comprise 12.5% of the American workforce, account for only 5% of tech workers.

To address this disparity, TECH CORPS requests that the Senate maintain the House-passed appropriation of \$100,000 per fiscal year to expand our Student TECH CORPS program by training

up to 20 teachers in classrooms across Ohio, who will, in turn, reach nearly 300 high school students. This program not only equips students with in-demand technology skills but also trains teachers to sustain the program within their schools, ensuring its long-term impact.

Student TECH CORPS is grounded in best practices in career-connected learning and provides hands-on training in areas such as hardware repair, operating systems, software applications, networking, and customer relations. Students apply these skills through a student-run help desk, gaining real-world experience by providing tech support to their schools and communities. This hands-on experience is invaluable in preparing them for future careers.

Our program aligns with Ohio's high school graduation requirements and offers students the opportunity to earn:

- A Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate, recognized by ApprenticeOhio
- An Industry-Recognized Credential (CompTIA Certification)
- Work-Based Learning Hours
- The Ohio Means Jobs Readiness Seal

This past year, our pilot program demonstrated remarkable success:

- Over 100 students earned Pre-Apprenticeship Certificates
- Nearly 50% earned an Industry-Recognized Credential
- 95% of students reported learning advanced technology skills
- Interest in technology careers increased among participants

Expanding the Student TECH CORPS program is an investment in Ohio's students, workforce, and economic future. By providing students with marketable technology skills and creating a sustainable program model, we can strengthen Ohio's talent pipeline and ensure that all students, regardless of their location, have access to the technology education they need to succeed.

We respectfully request your support for this vital initiative. Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions from the committee.