

Ohio State Budget Testimony

Ben Lindy 04.15.15

Thank you for your time.

My name is Ben Lindy. I'm the executive director of Teach For America in Southwest Ohio. Teach For America is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with communities to close the opportunity gap for students in under-resourced schools. We recruit, train and develop diverse educators who commit to teach in high-need public schools and become lifelong leaders in the effort to expand educational opportunity. Our teachers are fully licensed and certified.

Founded in 1990, Teach For America first came to Ohio in 2012, at which time we opened two regional chapters – one in Southwest Ohio, which spans Cincinnati and Dayton – and one in the Northeast region of the state. Over the past three years, we've fundraised privately from a broad range of foundations, corporations and individuals, and brought over 270 teachers, whom we call corps members while they're completing our two-year continuum of training, to the state. These teachers work in some of our hardest to staff classrooms and lead their students to outstanding outcomes. In 2013, a study by Mathematica Policy Research found that corps members lead their students to an additional 2.6 months of learning over the course of a school year.

In light of this impact – along with broader challenges in recruiting new teachers statewide – demand for Teach For America educators, including alumni of our program, has reached an all-time high. This fall, Cleveland Municipal School District has contracted for 55 corps members, up from 32 this year and 19 the year before. Cincinnati Public Schools hired 1 corps member in 2012 and now employs over 20 corps members and alumni. We're seeing similar trends at our other district partners, including Lorain and Dayton, and in our many charter school partners statewide. Demand has been especially steep in high-need subjects like math, science, special education, and English as a second language (ESL).

To put us in a position to keep pace with this growing demand, we seek a \$3M allocation in the state budget in each of the next two years. This will allow us to leverage state dollars to enhance our other fundraising efforts – where we have raised over \$12m since our launch. Our funders are proud of our impact to date but want to see the state of Ohio also invest in TFA, as at least fourteen other states have done. This would position Ohio as a model of public-private partnership and allow TFA to pursue and expand three critical priorities:

- First, to increase the number of corps members in the state to meet demand by increasing our recruitment operations at top Ohio universities and by offsetting the costs of selecting, and training corps members slated to teach in Ohio;
- Second, to extend and improve the extensive coaching and development support that has allowed our first cohorts of corps members to be so successful to date;
- And third, to expand the reach of our alumni support such that we retain local alumni to continue working in local schools and also attract TFA alumni from other states to join our local efforts as teachers, principals, instructional coaches and other essential personnel.

We're committed to continuing to be part of a broad, inspiring community working to open the doors of opportunity for all Ohio students and charting a brighter future for our state. Thank you for your consideration and I'd welcome any questions.