

Ohio Sunset Review Committee
Testimony 6/11/24

Chairs Wilkin and Hillyer, 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 mission and work.

Established in 1994, ServeOhio is charged with administering AmeriCorps programs and supporting volunteer engagement in Ohio. Under the federal National & Community Service Trust Act of 1993, states are required to have a state service commission to ensure that states and local communities have a key role in determining the allocation of national service resources. ServeOhio functions as Ohio's state service commission.

AMERICORPS

The commission's primary role is the funding and administration of AmeriCorps programs in Ohio. ServeOhio works with local communities to define critical needs and develop AmeriCorps programming as an intervention to address those needs. 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 ensure quality and compliance (programmatic and fiscal) 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. A fulltime AmeriCorps Member serves 1,700 hours within in a 10-12 month service term – earning a modest living allowance and education award upon successful completion.

In the current program year, ServeOhio is investing \$14 million in local AmeriCorps programming focused on education, economic opportunity, healthy futures and environmental stewardship. Over 1000 AmeriCorps Members will provide 1.2 million hours of service at over 500 service sites across the state.

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. This service year, Ohio AmeriCorps Members will receive over 130,000 hours of professional development (including industry certifications) and earn over \$4.6 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 throughout Ohio. Our National Days of Service Project Grants – MLK Day (January), Global Youth Service Day (April), ServeOhio Day (June) and Make A Difference Day (October) support 100+ locally-defined community projects that engage thousands of volunteers. The commission is expanding its work within youth service and service learning. In the past two years, we have launched a Youth Service Toolkit which includes service project and educational resources for youth of all ages; an online volunteer platform for high school students to find volunteer opportunities, record service and create a service resume; and a community impact award that celebrates high school students who volunteered 20+ hours in 4+ activities. In the 2023-2024 school year, 2,550 high school students from 50 schools in 35 cities will be honored for their service.

Developing and sustaining high-quality volunteer programming is challenging work – ServeOhio engages volunteer administrators throughout the state in professional development that builds and recognizes effective volunteer management practices. Over 600 volunteer administrators participated in ServeOhio professional development opportunities last year alone.

COMMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE

The Commission consists of 21 non-compensated members as defined in Ohio Revised Code 121.40, which composition is intended to be broadly inclusive and non-partisan, in compliance with federal statute (42 USC 12638).

- Four (4) voting members represent state agencies as follows: Department of Aging, Department of Higher Education, Department of Education, and Department of Youth Services. Members are designated by and serve at the pleasure of the agency directors.
- Fifteen (15) voting members are appointed by the Governor. Federal legislation requires representation of the following constituencies: community volunteer sector, program development, faith-based sector, national service programming, youth sector, business sector, community organizations, older adult sector, local government, and local labor.
- Two (2) non-voting members serve ex officio as follows: A Representative from the Regional Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Director of the Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

ServeOhio is primarily funded by our federal grantor – the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). All of our 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 (Commission Support Grant and Commission Investment Fund). The state investment in ServeOhio -- \$685,000 in the current fiscal year – is utilized for program development and administration and satisfies the required federal match.

We anticipate that our federal funding will remain level over the next budget cycle. Demand for resources in youth service and service learning continues to grow as more schools recognize the power of student service to increase engagement -- impacting such crucial issues as attendance, academic achievement and mental health. Given current and anticipated resources, we expect commission staff to remain at 10.0 FTEs with supplemental contract and consulting services.

For the past 30 years, ServeOhio has worked with local communities to build a strong national service and volunteer engagement infrastructure. We know that such programming provides vital workforce development and civic engagement while addressing crucial needs in education, health, economic opportunity and environmental stewardship. ServeOhio appreciates the opportunity to demonstrate our impact before this committee and respectfully requests reauthorization to continue our work.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information. I would be happy to answer any questions at this point.