



PRESS STATEMENT

RE: *Draft FY2012 Labor, Health and Human Services Funding Bill*

September 30, 2011

On September 29, 2011, The United State House of Representatives Appropriations Committee released the draft fiscal year 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services funding bill, which eliminates funding for critical resource-leveraging programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, such as VISTA and AmeriCorps. By defunding the Corporation for National and Community Service, 80,000 more Americans will be forced into the unemployment line nationally, at a time when our nation's unemployment rate is already on the rise. As one of the largest state-based sponsors of these programs, deploying more than 200 AmeriCorps and VISTA members who serve in foodbanks, food pantries, faith-based and community-based organizations across Ohio, the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks urges the United States Congress to fully fund the Corporation for National and Community Services.

The programs that are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service engage some of our best and brightest young people, as well as some of the most experienced older adults who engage in critical services to their communities. In exchange for giving an entire year or more of their lives to rebuilding communities devastated by the Great Recession and the lives of our less fortunate neighbors, National Service Members receive an allowance, indexed to the poverty level, and an education award. National Service Members work on the frontlines of the fight to strengthen Ohio and our nation's future at the local level, engaging tens of thousands of volunteers and leveraging millions of dollars in mostly private resources to fight hunger and poverty for approximately \$920 a month, an education award, deferment of their college loans, and modest health care.

To take this opportunity away, denying individuals the ability to volunteer full-time for a year, only making enough only to keep them fed and sheltered, would be a tragedy. Eliminating funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service will result in at least 80,000 missed opportunities for service, growth, and the ability of local, American ingenuity to solve critical problems. More importantly, we will also lose the resources mobilized by these 80,000 volunteers to make the lives of the least among us a measure more endurable.

Without these passionate, selfless National Servants and the programs that enable them to serve, meals will not be served; community gardens will go untended; homes will not be built; students will go untutored; and thousands of eager patriots will lose the opportunity to receive a pittance of living support while devoting their lives to fighting growing poverty.

“The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks’ National Service initiatives have demonstrated real and significant impacts in communities across Ohio. These dedicated Members provide desperately needed programs and services to our state’s most vulnerable citizens. The AmeriCorps and VISTA Members have helped feed tens of thousands of children through the Summer Food Service Program for Children, provided thousands of Back Packs to hungry children, helped low and moderate income Ohio’s complete their tax returns completely free of charge, and are serving a growing number of hungry Ohioans standing in lines at Ohio’s foodbanks, food pantries and soup kitchens. Ohio’s AmeriCorps and VISTA members have engaged 16,087 additional volunteers generating 121,809 additional volunteer hours and brought in \$743,129.00 in cash resources and \$462,727.00 in in-kind donations to local community organizations”, said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks. “We cannot afford to let funding for the Corporation for National and Community Services be eliminated, especially during a time when these selfless men and women are helping those who need our help the most.”

About the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks

OASHF is Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger, representing Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,100 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2011, OASHF and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute more than 150 million pounds of food and grocery items. Follow @OASHF on Twitter and stay connected on Facebook at www.facebook.com/oashf.

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