

February 24, 2015 Testimony

Chair Gomberg, Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Steve Pixley. I am the Volunteer Program Coordinator for the City of Portland Parks and Recreation Department. I also serve as Vice-Chair of the Oregon Volunteers Commission for Voluntary Action and Service as a volunteer.

As the statutory home for federal AmeriCorps funding in our state, Oregon Volunteers celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2014. Our small staff and program volunteers work hard every day to achieve our mission: *Strengthening our communities by inspiring Oregonians to actively engage, volunteer, and serve.*

As you will see from the information included in your handout, our programs create a big impact in every corner of our state and in a wide variety of focus areas, all targeted at meeting some of the state's most pressing needs. We do this through four programming areas: AmeriCorps, volunteerism, civic engagement, and Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA.

I am here today to ask you to support the \$3.5 million general fund appropriation for Oregon Volunteers included in the Governor's proposed budget.

\$3.25 million of those funds are earmarked for the CASA program. I cannot over-emphasize how important CASA is to children in our state. Since gaining statutory responsibility for administering CASA funds in 2012, we have worked hard to build trust and to help local CASA programs transition from the funding relationships they had with their county commissions on children and families to a centralized system administered at the state level. With our colleagues at the Oregon CASA Network we are working diligently to help insure stability of local programs and to build the capacity of the network. As the HB 4082 Task Force recognized last fall, CASA is a good fit under our strategic Volunteerism goal: *Organizations are capable of providing positive volunteer experiences and people are able to find meaningful, appropriate volunteer opportunities.*

Our CASA efforts would not be possible without the 1 FTE and administrative funds included in this budget. Our small staff would not have the bandwidth to oversee the program otherwise. We also want to speak in support of the additional \$.9 million included in the Governor's budget for local CASA programs. This would be the first increase in state funding for programs since 2009, and as our CASA colleagues will tell you, the need is great.

The remaining \$250,000 in the budget is general fund intended to stabilize Oregon Volunteers. Many of you are not aware that state commissions lost at least 62% of our federal funding in late 2011. Since then we have worked diligently to keep our programs alive and thriving. We have succeeded in spite of a 50% cut in staffing, but our ability to maintain is at risk. This small investment by the state will enable us to continue our current services and to leverage \$30.8 million from non-state funding sources, volunteerism, and national service in the next biennium.

These funds, combined with the budget note requiring us to report back to the Legislature next year about the most appropriate administrative structure for our continued success, are welcomed and needed.

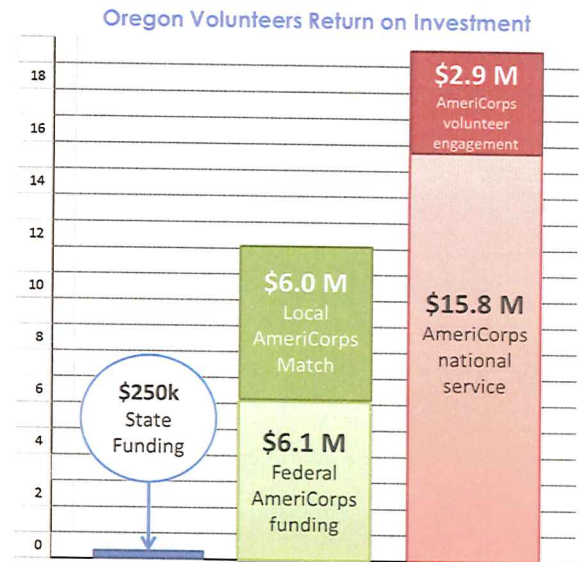
We look forward to working together with you and other members of the legislature to realize our vision for Oregon: *Volunteering is an integral, prominent, and essential part of every day life.*



Strengthening our communities by inspiring Oregonians to actively engage, volunteer and serve.

A \$250,000 investment by the State of Oregon will enable Oregon Volunteers to leverage **\$30.8 million** from non-state funding sources, volunteerism and national service in the 2015-17 biennium.

EACH \$1 INVESTED BY THE STATE OF OREGON WILL GENERATE A \$123.20 RETURN ON INVESTMENT.

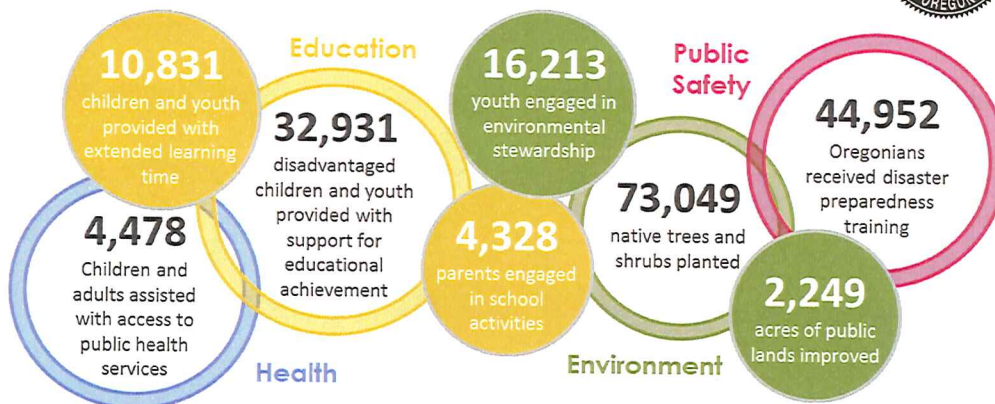


The Legislative Assembly declares that the purpose of this section is to promote the development of better communities by using citizen participation and volunteerism to foster greater civic responsibility. [ORS 458.578]

AmeriCorps

Oregon Volunteers promotes and supports quality AmeriCorps programs to address local needs identified by Oregon communities.

AmeriCorps members will provide more than **740,000 hours of service** supporting Oregon's 10-year plan this biennium.



Based on actual 2013-14 program year data and conservative projections for 2014-15.

- Federal law requires a state service commission to administer federal AmeriCorps funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The Oregon Volunteers Commission administers **\$6.1 million in federal funding** that is **matched with more than \$6 million** in federal, state, local and private funding by local programs.
- AmeriCorps members serving Oregon will earn education awards valued at more than **\$2.7 million** at the completion of their service to help them further their education and **reduce their student debt**.

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Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

Oregon Volunteers promotes and supports high quality CASA programs to advocate for the needs of abused and neglected children.



- Oregon Volunteers administers **\$1.1 million in state funds** annually to support CASA programs throughout Oregon.
- Children with a CASA volunteer are **less likely to experience new abuse**; have fewer foster care placement changes; **receive more services** like therapy, health care and education; are **more likely to be adopted** than remain in long-term foster care; have **greater self-esteem**; have a **positive attitude** toward the future; value achievement and work well with others. (National CASA Association)

Volunteerism & Civic Engagement

Oregon Volunteers promotes and supports volunteerism to ensure that volunteer organizations provide positive volunteer experiences and people are able to find meaningful, appropriate volunteer opportunities.

Oregon Volunteers promotes and supports civic engagement to ensure community organizations have the resources needed to involve residents in addressing local needs and residents participate in the life of their communities.

- Oregon Volunteers hosts the Governor’s Volunteer Awards which has **honored more than 200 Oregonians** for outstanding volunteer service since 2006.
- There is a positive relationship between volunteering and **better health outcomes among adults over the age of 60**, including higher levels of health and physical functioning, and lower levels of depression. (CNCS, 2007)
- Communities with better civic health have **greater resilience to unemployment**. (NCoC, 2012)

Volunteering contributes to Oregon’s health and prosperity.

