

Hi, my name is Jordan Jungwirth. I am a two time AmeriCorps Alumn (2013-2014 & 2014-2015) and I have also worked for the United Community Action Network's AmeriCorps Program of 5+ years until December 2020. Since 2013, I have been heavily immersed in national service here in Oregon and know firsthand the amazing contributions that AmeriCorps is part of in SW Oregon, as well as in communities across our state. Many individuals join service not only for the professional development and ability to give back to communities, but the largest financial motivations to join service is to receive the Segal Education Award, in addition to having their federally backed loans placed into forbearance. As an alumni and previous staff person, I know how these financial benefits can also impose unexpected financial barriers - and one that can make service not only inaccessible to individuals, but cause unnecessary financial hardship. Currently, the education award that AmeriCorps members receive is subject to state tax. Many AmeriCorps members wait to use their Segal Education award as they have 7 years from their last day of service to disperse the benefit as they continue sorting through their educational/professional path. In 2016, when I used my two awards to pay off my remaining student loans, I was out more money than I ever expected due to utilizing both awards while being in a higher financial bracket due to full-time employment. The tax that I incurred on my award was far larger than I had planned, creating a huge financial hardship for me. It took me months to recover my savings that I had to use to pay the taxes on my award, after already spending two years surviving on the AmeriCorps living allowance. Despite sharing my story with cohorts of AmeriCorps members year after year that I worked with while on staff, I continued hearing similar stories from members and alumni of my program. By eliminating the tax on AmeriCorps education awards in our state, you are ensuring that AmeriCorps members will stay in the state to use the stipends they have earned at one of our higher education institutions, and we are more likely to stay in the state and participate in the workforce post-graduation. As my representative, can I count on you to remove taxes on the AmeriCorps Segal education award, so that AmeriCorps alumni will not be financially burdened when they use the award that they have earned?