

Hello,

My name is Casey Rauch, and I would like to share my support of HB2737, the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award Tax Relief Bill, which would provide an income tax exemption for AmeriCorps members who are using their Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. As a private citizen of Oregon with a personal connection to service as an AmeriCorps Alumna, I have seen the impact AmeriCorps has in our communities and in the lives of those we serve.

As an Alumna, and specifically one from a low-income background, I remember the challenges of getting by on such a small living allowance. However, serving a community and giving of myself was very important to me. I've always been passionate about education, and, again, coming from a low-income background, I struggled to pay for mine. The Segal Education Award was certainly a motivator when choosing to serve as an AmeriCorps, and although that award was certainly helpful, I am still living with debt from my education. I remember having to navigate the tax implications of using my education award, and that was incredibly challenging, especially after serving for a year on a meager living allowance. We want to encourage all who are interested in serving with AmeriCorps to be able to do so, and I feel it's our duty to make this opportunity accessible to all, including those from more marginalized identities and low-income backgrounds. This income tax exemption on the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is one way to start making AmeriCorps service more accessible to all.

AmeriCorps members serve for at least one year to benefit their communities in the state of Oregon by playing critical roles in meeting growing needs, including tutoring and mentoring children; revitalizing communities through leveraging countless volunteers; improving public safety; and supporting communities during disaster, such as the recent wildfires and the pandemic. One of the key benefits of completing service in AmeriCorps is the opportunity to expand your education or repay student loans through the use of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award (\$6,345 for full-time members). Currently, the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is taxed as regular income. This can cause financial hardship for many AmeriCorps members as well as a delay on plans to seek higher education or make necessary payments on past loans. Many universities and colleges in Oregon receive the benefits of the Segal Education Award. Over 20,000 people have served in Oregon since 1994. More than \$33M of earned awards in Oregon have gone back to educational and financial partners around the state. HB2737 will:

- Eliminate state taxation on the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award;
- Allow AmeriCorps alumni who are unable to use the full value of the award because it is taxed, use the full value to attain career and education goals.
- Attract more people to service in Oregon because of the increased value of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award
- Ensure that the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is treated like the Pell Grant and the G.I. Bill, two very similar U.S. educational awards.

AmeriCorps is a pathway to education and employment in Oregon. I urge you to support the AmeriCorps members who are making such a positive change in this community and help clear a pathway to educational and economic opportunity for those who serve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,  
Casey Rauch