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From the Portland Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/portland/news/2017/03/10/former-fred-meyer-ceo-on-the-fight-to-save.html>

Guest opinion

Former Fred Meyer CEO on the fight to save AmeriCorps

Ken Thrasher explains why Trump's bid to slash Corporation for National and Community Service will prove damaging to the economy

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As an experienced business person who has been forced to make tough budget decisions, I always first tried to understand the objectives of the program being considered for cuts, what it costs, and what it produces in outcomes, better known as return on investment (ROI). It allowed our companies to make informed decisions and to prioritize budget decisions.

I was shocked to hear the president and speaker of the house had decided they needed to cut the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) from the federal budget, which produces some of the finest young mentors and community service workers in America, better known as AmeriCorps (national and states), VISTA, and Senior Corps. This federal budget decision is being made with no program recipient input, no benefit analysis, and no evaluation. Producing some 80,000 young people annually serving an estimated 3 million plus students, college aspirants, seniors and veterans, at a cost estimated to be \$1 billion (or the cost of one wing on a single stealth bomber), this is a tragic mistake if allowed to be discontinued. Cutting this program will have a negative ripple effect on children, families, and communities.

I was involved in helping bring one of the CNCS' supported signature programs using AmeriCorps and VISTA to Oregon, a great national program called College Possible. We carefully studied how these AmeriCorps and VISTA participants — recent graduates from



ABIGAIL TUPA, COLLEGE POSSIBLE AMERICORPS COMMUNICATIONS VISTA

Miguel, a College Possible AmeriCorps coach, works with a student researching college options during an after school session at Madison High School in Portland earlier this year.

college who give one to two years of their life to help low income and diverse young people enter and graduate with a four-year college degree — were being effective in other College Possible chapters nationally. These near-peer mentors serve thousands of students nationally and have outstanding results in achieving their goals, which is why we felt the ROI was so compelling.

Focusing our efforts on high schools in east Portland and in rural communities, we have seen low-income high school students in College Possible here increase their ACT scores 26 percent, 96 percent of high school seniors be accepted to college, and expect to see most of these students graduate from college. They also receive financial literacy education and do community service. Versus their low income peers, they will graduate from college at a 10-to-1 ratio for all high school students, and 4-to-1 for just those peer students that enter college. College Possible levels the playing field for our students who are 100 percent from low-income families, more than 90 percent are first-generation students, 73 percent are diverse, and 71 percent are women.

There are three significant paybacks from this program: individual success and breaking the cycle of poverty, preparing a stronger workforce for tomorrow, and reducing social costs. It also benefits the AmeriCorps and VISTA mentors in the program, that work for so little compensation, but whose service results in a life-changing experience that will lead many to be some of our best future leaders.

So what is the Federal government's ROI for cutting this effective program?

No one knows. I challenge the public, businesses, politicians and others to strongly oppose this cut. It's not good for our youth, our community, our businesses, or our country's future.