

My mother spent her entire career working for the local school district, following in the footsteps of my grandmother, who was a high school teacher. My family emphasized the importance of service from an early age, both as volunteers in our free time and through our careers.

As I finished college, I knew that I wanted to work in government, but had no idea where to begin. I applied for full-time jobs and attended career fairs without any luck, and was considering giving up on the goal of working in government. On the advice of a good friend, I applied for a public service fellowship program that provided a one-year placement in a government position. That single fellowship experience had a transformative impact on my career. I spent every day doing meaningful, impactful work that stretched me and helped me grow as a professional. I met people who remain close friends and mentors. And by the end of the year, I knew where I wanted to take my career.

Looking back ten years later, I'm surprised by all the ways that this single experience shaped my life and career trajectories. First, the job experience itself reinforced my commitment to a service-focused career, and since that time I've continued on this path through a series of government and non-profit roles.

Second, the experience was so much more than a job. I received yearlong support and training through the fellowship program, including advice on work and career questions. At the office, I benefited from the mentorship and guidance of my supervisor, who set aside time to talk with me about my professional goals.

Finally, the fellowship helped me build a network that has supported me throughout my career. As I finished the fellowship year in 2012, one of my co-workers gave feedback on my resume and shared interview tips. Another made a series of introductions, one of which led to my next job (and to the job after that). And I've stayed in touch with other fellows from my program, sharing updates and advice back and forth as we navigate our careers.

I was fortunate to have this opportunity. Across the country each year, thousands of people apply for service positions that are too often in short supply. I strongly support this Maryland Corps legislation because it will ensure accessible, quality service opportunities are available across the state.