



## TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 608

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Ohio Legislature Community and Family Advancement Committee

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Good morning Chairman Ginter and members of the Family and Community Advancement Committee. My name is Sam Adolphsen, and I serve as a Vice President at Opportunity Solutions Project. I appreciate the opportunity to speak briefly to you today in support of House Bill 608.

You all are here because you want to help people in need here in Ohio. You have worked hard on your welfare system because you know there are folks out there who need help getting on the path to independence. Those people who struggle to make ends meet for a period of time benefit from your hard work, and you are doing the right thing by working to make this system better for those who need it.

Unfortunately, for too many in Ohio today, the system is failing them. Not everyone shares your goal of moving people from independence to self-sufficiency, and in some cases, your generosity is being taken advantage of. The result is a welfare system that has grown dramatically. In the year 2000 there were just about 600,000 people on food stamps in Ohio. Today, there are 1.4 million.

Instead of program resources being focused on lifting up the truly needy, able-bodied, working-age adults are increasingly dependent on the program. There are more than 400,000 working age, able-bodied adults on the program. And unfortunately, more than half don't work at all. So instead of filling one of the hundreds of thousands of open jobs in Ohio, they stay stuck in dependency long-term.

When the public and taxpayers see this, and they see people with significant resources taking advantage of the program, they lose faith in the system.

The good news is that you can protect the program for the truly needy and for taxpayers. The bill you are considering helps to do that in four basic steps.

- First, it closes a food stamp loophole by reining in work requirement waiver abuse, and makes sure that able-bodied adults with no kids at home are required to work, train, or volunteer.
- Next, it requires parents whose kids have already started school to work, train or volunteer part-time to continue receiving food stamps, and it makes sure they are taking the first steps towards independence.
- Then, it checks to make sure millionaires and lottery winners aren't receiving benefits.
- And finally, it requires parents on welfare to cooperate with the state's attempts to collect child support in order to continue receiving benefits. Today, just 1 out of 3 single-parent families on food stamps in Ohio receive the child support they are owed.

These four steps protect taxpayers and move Ohioans from welfare to work. And because it's been tried all over the country, we know it works. As the former Chief Operating Officer of Maine's Health and Human Services Department I saw the results firsthand when we applied these solutions.

After we implemented food stamp work requirements in Maine, incomes doubled, and caseloads dropped by 90 percent. Florida saw similar results, and people got off of welfare, going back to work in hundreds of different industries. And when Kansas required cooperation with child support in order to receive food stamps, collections increased dramatically. If they increased by the same rate in Ohio, it would mean an additional \$12 million in child support given to families.

Voters are on your side. They understand the difference between the safety net and those who abuse it. The same 75 to 80 percent who support the safety net also believe in preserving food stamps for those who truly need help.

Thank you and I'm happy to take any questions you might have.