



**Testimony: HB: 166
FY 2020-21 Biennial Budget
Judy Mobley, President & CEO
Children's Hunger Alliance
April 9, 2019**

Background

Good Afternoon Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking member West, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. My name is Judy Mobley, and I am the President and CEO of Children's Hunger Alliance, a non-profit organization dedicated to the alleviation of childhood hunger in Ohio. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today regarding our funding request in the FY 2020-21 budget.

We define food insecurity as limited or uncertain access to enough food to support a healthy life. Many food insecure children simply don't know when they'll eat next. According to recent childhood food insecurity statistics, Ohio ranks 8th highest by percentage of children at 20.3% or 1 in 5 and 5th highest based on the actual number of children with more than 529,000 of Ohio's children experiencing hunger. This is difficult to hear and regardless of where we rank nationally too many of our children are being negatively impacted by this issue. Studies show that lack of proper nutrition affects a child's overall mental and physical development which can lead to performance problems in school, chronic health issues and greater occurrences of childhood obesity. We must provide our children with enough food to eat if we expect them to succeed in school, overcome poverty and become productive members of society as adults.

Children's Hunger Alliance is a non-profit organization founded in 1970. Our mission is to ensure children without enough to eat receive healthy food, nutrition education and participate in physical activity. We are a statewide organization with a FY19 annual operating budget of approximately \$11.6 million. We are currently one of the largest and most geographically diverse sponsors in Ohio of the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program administered by the Ohio Department of Education. We sponsor approximately 67% of all family childcare

providers and 35% of afterschool programs in the state. This federal program enables us to provide healthy meals and snacks to children struggling with poverty in afterschool programs, childcare centers and also those being cared for by in-home childcare providers.

Children's Hunger Alliance provided approximately 14 million meals and snacks over the last two years to Ohio's children through our direct sponsorship of over 275 afterschool meal sites, 30 daycare centers, and over 700 in-home childcare providers.

In addition to our CACFP sponsorship work we have a team that works across the state with schools to increase breakfast participation. In Ohio only 56% of children eligible for a free or reduced priced lunch currently participate in school breakfast. We partner with school districts to evaluate their existing breakfast model and implement best practices that increase breakfast participation in a cost-effective manner. We have many examples of the success this type of collaboration can achieve and in the end the children are the real beneficiaries because more of them can start their school day ready to learn.

Our work allows us to serve children where they are and ensure they receive healthy meals *before* and *after* school each day. This is critical to their wellbeing when a hungry child finds no food at home.

We also know that unfortunately only 10 percent of children who rely on school breakfast and lunch, have access to free meals during the summer. We work to increase access to summer meal programs offered at locations such as community centers, churches, schools and day camps. We have helped schools and other organizations develop mobile feeding programs that transport meals to different locations so kids have an opportunity to receive the meals they need close to home.

Finally, Children's Hunger Alliance provides nutrition education and physical activity opportunities to children in an effort for them to learn about healthy food choices and stay active to help reduce the incidence of obesity and chronic disease and to promote lifelong healthy habits. Our Nutrition Education Team helps in-home childcare providers learn how to plan meals that provide healthy food to the children in their care. We also offer nutrition education and physical activity programming in childcare centers, afterschool programs and summer meal sites.



FY 2020-21 Budget request

The work we do at Children's Hunger Alliance to provide our most vulnerable citizens with one of their most basic needs - food - is critical for tens of thousands of Ohio children who depend on our services.

In your packet you have a document titled *Ohio: Program Performance*. This document was provided by one of our National Anti-Hunger Partners, Share Our Strength. It again reiterates that 1 in 5 children in Ohio lack enough food to support a healthy life-style and it also highlights where Ohio ranks relative to the USDA nutrition programs.....27th in school breakfast participation, 37th in the summer meals program and 48th in the afterschool nutrition program. Just for clarification that means 47 states are ranked better than Ohio in the afterschool nutrition program. I've provided this summary to not only show you how much work we still must do but also to show you the need to support organizations like Children's Hunger Alliance. These federal nutrition programs are vital to our children but are only successful when you have organizations step up to both operate the program sites and serve as meal sponsors.

In order to sustain our work and be able to continue meeting the needs of food insecure children in our state, Children's Hunger Alliance is requesting \$2.35 million in state funding over the FY 2020-21 biennium. This funding will allow us to sustain our programming in our four core program areas – early childhood nutrition, school and summer nutrition, afterschool nutrition, and nutrition education and physical activity. A copy of our budget request is included in your packet. Children's Hunger Alliance has a history of state funding, having received approximately \$2 million in General Revenue Funding through the Ohio Department of Education from FY 2004 through FY 2009. We also received TANF funding in the FY 2008-09 and the FY 2019-20 biennium.

While we recognize that many worthy organizations are requesting funding in this budget cycle, it is important to note that funding Children's Hunger Alliance programs represents an excellent return on investment for Ohio taxpayers. Our direct sponsorship work would leverage approximately \$17 million of federal nutrition funds back to Ohio over the biennium. Additionally, our advocacy work with schools to increase breakfast participation and our support of summer meal



sites directly increases the federal child nutrition funds they receive. We estimate that this would add another \$4 million of federal child nutrition funds bringing the total dollars leveraged to approximately \$21 million.

In conclusion, Children's Hunger Alliance plays a unique role in Ohio's hunger relief system. Receiving state funding would allow us to sustain our work and provide vital services to address childhood hunger in high need areas throughout Ohio.

Chairman Romanchuk and Committee members, I thank you for your time and consideration of our funding request. I am now available to address any questions that you may have.

