

Good Morning Chairman Beagle Ranking Member Williams and Members of the Committee

I'm Pastor Karen Cook from the Church for All People. Today I'm here as spokesperson for the Faith Coalition for the Common Good.

I'm here to talk about poverty as you consider the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Budget. Last year HB 383 was passed, which created a workgroup to Help Individuals Cease Relying on Public Assistance.

I submit to you today that in a state with a 16% annualized poverty rate, and less than 16,000 adults on cash assistance statewide, that perhaps a better question is how do we move people out of poverty instead of removing people from benefits they may need to survive? The fastest growing job sectors in Ohio also have the lowest wages. What can be done to close the low wage gap for the tens of thousands of Ohioans who need public benefits to make ends meet? A job is no longer a living for many in Ohio. Sometimes not even two or three jobs are enough.

In Ohio there is an estimated 1.7 million people who are poor, according to a report by the Ohio Development Services Agency. That is 16 percent of our population.

Take a look at the map they prepared here. The red counties are 20-31% county population in poverty. The golden counties are those with 15.9 to 19.9 county population in poverty. The report also found 27.8 percent of those living in the central or principal cities of metro areas were poor.

From my vantage point as a pastor in metro Columbus I encounter individuals who are working hard to care for their families and communities. They are doing all they can to provide the best future for their children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Yet, everyday they fall short. Every day countless Ohioans must ask not what will I have for dinner but will I have dinner. The issue at hand is not a lack of management but a lack of money. The issue is not a lack of resolve but a lack of resources. We have a duty to the parent who must put their child to bed hungry. We have a duty to the individual who works and yet is still not able to provide enough to cover the basic costs of living.

The ministries that take place on the South Side of Columbus are geared toward helping families and individuals to have access to nutritious and healthy food, affordable and safe housing, access to high quality health care and access to job. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with the demand of those who walk through our doors every day.

We ask for your support of \$5.5 million for the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, and the TANF/Prevention, Retention, & Contingency program, also known as PRC. Ohio's PRC program is important because it provides work supports and other services to help people overcome immediate barriers to employment and help them get through crisis situations. PRC is funded through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Assistance can include the purchase

of necessities like work clothes, work boots, tools, safety equipment, bus tickets, or short-term educational expenses. PRC can also be used for transportation, housing and utility assistance.

But this vital resource has been reduced and even in its reduced form, and is not being uniformly administered throughout the state.

Our proposed PRC amendment calls for the program to be available in every county. In addition, local counties could not suspend the PRC program unless all funds earmarked for that purpose are exhausted.

We appreciate your consideration of this important amendment. This direct cash assistance to people in poverty is vital, because it can mean the difference between work and no work, stability and insecurity, and hope and hopelessness.

Thank you for your time.



**Development
Services Agency**

Research Office
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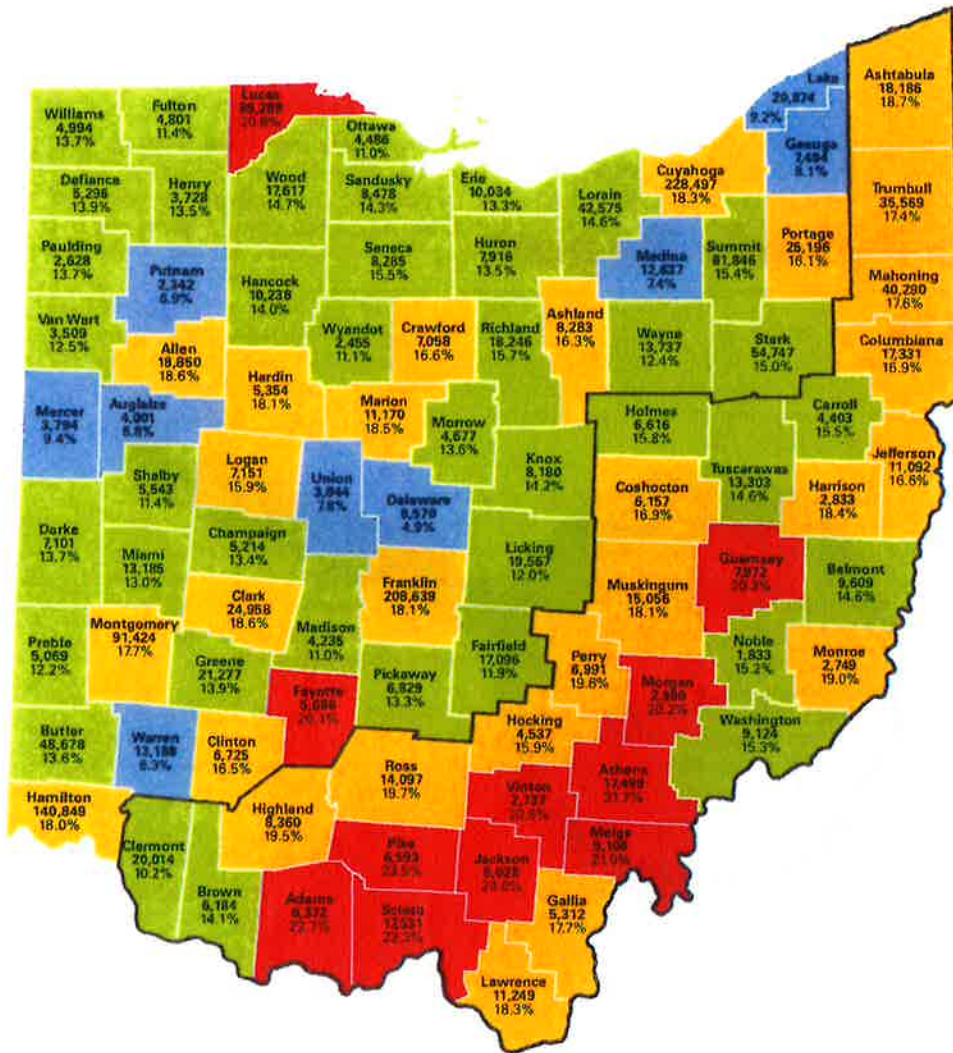
The Ohio Poverty Report

January 2015



Ohio

Poverty in Ohio by County 2009-2013 American Community Survey



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The latest data show:
 - An estimated 1,797,000 people in Ohio were poor – that is 16.0 percent of all persons for whom poverty status was determined.
 - An estimated 340,000, or 11.6 percent, of Ohio families were poor.
- Ohio's individual and family poverty rates typically were lower than the corresponding national rates in decades past, but gradually converged to the national rates by about 2005; Ohio's rates since then have been nearly equal to or a little higher than the national averages.
- The latest American Community Survey data also show:
 - 17.2 percent of the people in urban places (densely populated areas of 2,500 or more) were poor, and 27.8 percent of those living in the central or principal cities of metropolitan areas were poor. By contrast, 11.0 percent of those in rural areas (farms and smaller places) were poor, while 11.0 percent of metropolitan area residents *outside* of the principal and central cities were poor.
 - 17.6 percent of the people in Appalachian Ohio, a band of 32 counties in south and east, were poor; the poverty rate for the rest of Ohio averaged 15.4 percent.
 - The counties with the lowest poverty rates were Delaware, Warren, Putnam, Medina and Union, ranging from 4.9 to 7.8 percent; all border or are part of metropolitan areas. The counties with the highest poverty rates were Athens, Jackson, Pike, Scioto and Adams, ranging from 22.7 to 31.7 percent; all are in Appalachia.
 - 79 of Ohio's 88 counties and the vast majority of its larger cities had significantly higher poverty rates during 2009-2013 than they had in 1999.
- Poverty rates for families and individuals in Ohio during 2012-2013 vary by circumstances and characteristics:
 - Married couples with a full-time/year-round worker had poverty rates less than two percent compared with poverty rates of 10 percent or more among couples lacking a full-time/year-round worker.
 - Other families with a full-time/year-round head had poverty rates between four and 13 percent, while those without one had poverty rates greater than 30 percent.
 - Families with related children had poverty rates ranging from 7.3 percent among married couples to 55.3 percent for those headed by a female single-parent; the corresponding poverty rates for families without children ranged from 3.1 percent to 11.7 percent; male single-parent families had poverty rates between these end points.
 - 23.1 percent of poor families received cash public assistance, compared with just 5.9 percent of those not in poverty; however, such payments seldom boost families out of poverty.
 - 4.2 percent of adults with at least bachelor's degrees were poor, while 29.6 percent of those who did not graduate from high school were poor; high school graduates and those with some college or an associate's degree had poverty rates between these two extremes.
 - Children ages 0 to 11 and young adults 18 to 24 had poverty rates exceeding 20 percent; other working-age adults had poverty rates between 10 and 20 percent.
 - While less than 10 percent of people ages 65 and older were poor, up to 63 percent of them would have been poor without social security and pension incomes.
 - 11.4 percent of Asians/Pacific islanders and 12.7 percent of non-Hispanics whites were poor; poverty rates for other races and Hispanics ranged between 27 and 34 percent.



Prevention, Retention and Contingency

Ohio's Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) program provides work supports and other services to help low-income parents overcome immediate barriers to employment. It is funded through the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. Those receiving assistance from other public assistance programs – including Disability Financial Assistance and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) – also may be eligible for PRC services.

Who is eligible for PRC services?

Benefits and services are available for certain low-income families who need short-term help during a crisis or time of need. This includes:

- Parents of children under 18, including noncustodial parents if they live in Ohio
- Pregnant women or teens

What types of services may be offered?

- Clothing and shelter
- Domestic violence housing relocation assistance
- Disaster assistance
- Transportation (including auto repair expenses or a down payment on an automobile)
- Employment and training

PRC services vary between counties based on community needs. Each county has a PRC plan stating the types of services available in that county and the eligibility criteria for them. County PRC plans can be found at <http://jfs.ohio.gov/owf/prc/county/countytable.stm>.

For more information, contact your county department of job and family services.

How can I apply for PRC services?

To find out what your county offers and to see if you might be eligible, contact your county department of job and family services.