

Ohio House of Representatives - Education and Career Readiness Committee  
Proponent Testimony – House Bill 224  
Rachel Tilford – Little Miami Schools, Food Service Director  
January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018

Hello, my name is Rachel Tilford, Food Service Director of Little Miami Schools in Warren County and the Legislative Chairperson for the School Nutrition Association of Ohio. I would like to thank Representative Ingram and sponsors for their support and careful consideration of food waste in our school systems. The School Nutrition Association of Ohio and I are proponents of House Bill 224.

There are a few key points to consider with House Bill 224:

- School Food Service Authorities must manage financially self-sufficient operations by carefully managing all resources.
- Ohio's students need to be well-nourished and have maximum ability to learn
- All food resources are handled in a manner that provides for safe consumption

Our goal is to provide healthy and nutritious meals that will allow our students the energy needed to be successful in their school day and in the long term successful in life. I approach everyday with the notion that if I do my job right I am silently contributing to the life achievements of every student in my district.

At Little Miami Schools some of our students come to school very hungry due to inadequate food supplies at home while others have plenty. Food insecurity is a real problem for many students in Ohio and across our country. The National School Lunch Program is here to help these students. The use of food sharing tables allows food that is unconsumed by one student to be selected by another student that may not have enough to eat.

There are many reasons why food can wind up on these tables. For example, some students may grab some of the meals components out of habit and then not have enough appetite to finish the entire meal. In this case, unopened packaged items may be placed on a table for other students to enjoy. For refrigerated items, like milk, yogurt and cheese sticks, temperature control accommodations are made to ensure that food safety is maintained. Food sharing tables help avoid wasting food that would otherwise be thrown by students. Additionally, food sharing tables help other students to get an added boost of energy needed to tackle the day.

Unfortunately, the good news stops there. At the end of the last serving period, the Ohio Department of Health requires that all foods remaining on the sharing tables be discarded, even in light of the good health and sanitation practices taken to keep foods at the proper and

safe temperatures. All school food service programs are federally required to maintain extensive HACCP programs to ensure food safety throughout our operations.

Further, it is difficult throw perfectly good food in the garbage can. Try opening your refrigerator and tossing several dollars' worth of food into the trash. Staff have expressed concern that if people in our conservative community ever witnessed such waste that our department would be viewed negatively for wasting taxpayer's money and probably wind up as a scandalous media story.

Each year we must carefully budget to run a fiscally self-sufficient operation while providing the most healthful and appealing foods as possible for \$2.40/meal. This is a thin margin to maintain six full operating kitchens and a staff of thirty employees. The ability to reclaim and re-serve approximately fifty refrigerated items that are being discarded each day will bring approximately \$3,000 dollars back to our operations. These funds then can be used in a responsible fashion for our students. Little Miami is a school district of 5,000 students; imagine these numbers multiplied by all districts across the state. By passing House Bill 224, a tremendous amount of taxpayer dollars will be saved from food waste and used in a manner that will serve our students and not our trashcans.