

## Testimony Amended Sub. H. B. 49

Ohio Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid

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Good morning Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Tavares, and distinguished members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your previous support in the last budget for our state-funded food programs. My name is Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, and I serve as the executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks (the association), Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger. We represent Ohio's 12 foodbanks, providing critical programs, food, funding, training, and technical assistance to

**3,300 member food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters and new in-demand site based distributions outlets.** Over 80 percent of our charities are faith-based, volunteer-driven, and operating on budgets of less than \$25,000 a year. Together, more than 2 million different Ohioans, 1 in 6 of our hungry and poor friends and neighbors were served by our programs last year.



### The Ohio Benefit Bank™

The Ohio Benefit Bank™ is an innovative online service was implemented in 2006, by the Ohio Association of Foodbanks in partnership with the State of Ohio, four federal agencies, eight state agencies, and more than 1,000 faith-based and community organizations and 3,400 trained staff and volunteer counselors. Its purpose is to connect Ohio's families with work support programs and tax credits through one streamlined platform. To date, the OBB has helped more than 885,000 Ohioans gain access to tax credits and potential work supports worth more than \$1.68 billion!



The association also serves as the home of the Ohio Benefit Bank™, leads the statewide Affordable Care Act (ACA) Navigator Grant, manages Ohio's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach Grant, and operates the largest SNAP Work Experience Program (WEP) serving SNAP work mandated recipients in Franklin County.

Our association has been honored to partner with the State of Ohio for over two decades now – working collaboratively to develop innovative public private partnership programs and joint efforts that reduce hunger, food insecurity and poverty in our state.

Characterized as one of the most effective public-private partnerships operating today, the Ohio Food Program and the Agricultural Clearance Program (OFPACP) has been supported by four governors, 10 General Assemblies, four administrations, and funded through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) budget.

These programs prevent waste, reduce loss for farmers and growers, increases and sustains employment in Ohio, representing the most nutritious food our foodbank distribute, and, most importantly, provides the most wholesome food we purchase for pennies on the pound.

## Overview of Ohio Association of Foodbanks Food Programs

In state fiscal year 2016, funding was provided for a series of programs to enhance the availability of fresh fruits, vegetables, protein items and shelf staple items to Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks. The two largest programs are the Ohio Food Program, which focuses on protein and shelf staple items, and the Agricultural Clearance Program, which directs agricultural surplus items from Ohio farmers and growers to the foodbanks. Each of these programs was funded at \$9.5 million in FY16 for a combined total of \$19 million. In an additional \$2 million in state funding was provided to supplement the availability of food supplies to Ohio families over the summer. The Summer Weekend Meals program provides shelf-stable, kid-friendly weekend meals for children attending summer food sites. The Summer Rural Delivery Meals Program provides kids in underserved, rural counties where no federally funded summer meal programs are available with a week's worth of shelf-stable, kid-friendly meals. Finally, the Mobile Farmers Market Program provides fresh fruits and vegetables and popular protein items such as peanut butter to families in the Summer Weekend and Rural Delivery Meals programs.

In FY16, the state's investment of \$19.5 million in funding for the Agricultural Clearance Program, Ohio Food Program, and the \$2.3 million in funding of the Governor's Summer Meals Programs added **\$45.3 million in economic output** across Ohio, generated **\$14.2 million in income**, and led to the creation of **487 jobs**, in addition to the direct benefits of providing **46.1 million meals** to needy Ohioans.

Despite these successful programs and outcomes, hunger continues to increase in Ohio – more people are needing more food more frequently. Over the last two years, we have experienced significant increases and demands for more food to support new site based food pantries located in schools and on college campuses, (K-12 and Higher Education) at health care clinics, VA clinics and low-income senior housing complexes. We have received over 500 new partner requests to supply them with on-site, produce distributions and mobile food pantry markets.

Hunger is a complex problem in Ohio, affecting 1 in 4 children, 1 in 8 seniors including more grandparents who report caring for their grandchildren and great grandchildren, and 1 in 3 working poor Ohioans. Compounding this complex problem, that has placed increased and sustained

demand on our statewide network have been the result of both state and federal changes to the SNAP/Food Stamp Program, which is the first line of defense against hunger. These changes began in late 2013 and were completely outside of our control and the people we serve. The Ohioans we serve who are poor enough to qualify for food stamps have lost over \$1.28 billion in 100% federally-funded food assistance representing the loss of over 875 million meals. In addition, 303,084 fewer Ohioans are receiving food assistance benefits due to time limits and other policy provisions.

To help us meet the increasing demands, it will require a comprehensive solution—including government funding, private and corporate donations, community and faith-based partnerships, and access to federal nutrition programs and other programs for low-income individuals and families. A Comprehensive Approach is critical to this solution.

This approach will allow Ohio to set the standard for addressing food insecurity in the most extensive and focused manner possible. We humbly request your support for a \$5 million per year amendment from unobligated TANF Block Grant funding, to partially support a range of proven cost effective and targeted food programs. It is a fiscally responsible solution that will provide flexibility in delivering real hunger relief across Ohio, including:

- The **Ohio Food Program**, providing shelf-stable foods; The **Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program**, providing surplus fresh produce, meats, and eggs and supporting Ohio's farmers;
- Governor's Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives innovative **programs for Ohio's hungry children**, such as the summer weekend meals program and the summer rural delivery meals program, that fill nutritional gaps during breaks from school and Summer **farmers' market programs** targeting families with children;

This proposed Comprehensive Approach will reduce administrative costs and overhead; integrate all programs in a manner that maximizes opportunities for efficiency and cost savings; increases our ability to leverage food purchases and public-private partnerships across programs; and streamline program operations and overall effectiveness.

Unfortunately, our modest and humble request was not included in the Ohio House passed version of Amended Sub. HB 49 and much to our surprise and deep disappointment, the bill contained a new provision in Section 307.45 line 133163 that reduces and redirects \$1,000,000 from the Association's existing appropriation. This harmful provision, disregards the significant benefits of the economies of scale in our purchasing power and will negatively impact our 12 foodbanks, 3,300 member charities and over 2 million hungry Ohioans. This loss of \$500,000 per year or \$1,000,000 over the biennium proposed by this provision will result in the loss of over of 5,500,000 million pounds of produce, representing 138 semi-tractor trailer loads of Ohio grown vegetables. A loss to Ohio farmers and those who work to grow, harvest and supply this wholesome food to hungry Ohioans.

#### **SNAP Work Experience Program**

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks has partnered with the Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services since 2012, to provide work mandated SNAP recipients in Franklin County with the opportunity to meet their SNAP work requirement. Over 8,800 Work Experience Program (WEP) participants have been assessed and placed at community and faith-based organizations to fulfill their work requirement while gaining valuable job skills and experience through volunteer service after being placed at one of our many host sites across Franklin County. No matter what type of skill-set participants have, we strive to find a suitable work experience placement. Last year 172 WEP participants gained employment as a result of their participation.

***In closing, I want to thank you for your previous support and consideration. The Association humbly request that this committee accept an amendment to restore the \$1,000,000 the Ohio House of Representatives redirected, to Section 307.40 Ohio Association of Foodbanks.***

In addition, ***we request your support and adoption of an amendment for \$5 million per year from existing federal funding—to support a Comprehensive Approach to Hunger relief***, that will direct the maximum amount of funding available to Ohioans who need it most, putting food on the tables of Ohio families, positioning our children to be healthy and ready to learn, protecting the welfare of our senior citizens and other vulnerable populations, and setting the hunger relief standard among states.

Feeding hungry Ohioans, many who are disabled, elderly, sick and suffering from chronic diseases, has the potential to save the State billions in short- and long-term health care expenditures, increasing human capital and our ability to meet the challenge of a global economy. Thank you for your support and consideration of these modest and humble request. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time.

<http://ohiofoodbanks.org/docs/publications/10th-anniversary-retrospective-final-web.pdf>

[http://ohiofoodbanks.org/docs/publications/losing\\_ground\\_updated\\_march\\_2017.pdf](http://ohiofoodbanks.org/docs/publications/losing_ground_updated_march_2017.pdf)

[http://ohiofoodbanks.org/docs/publications/SFY2016\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://ohiofoodbanks.org/docs/publications/SFY2016_annual_report.pdf)

[http://ohiofoodbanks.org/summermeals/summer\\_initiatives\\_2016.pdf](http://ohiofoodbanks.org/summermeals/summer_initiatives_2016.pdf)

<http://ohiofoodbanks.org/docs/publications/OFPACP-analysis-2016.pdf>

### **Cincinnati COOKS!**

Cincinnati COOKS! Is a free culinary job training program operated by the Freestore Foodbank for under- and unemployed individuals. During the 10-week course, students learn the mechanics of a commercial kitchen, as well as professional and life skills to ensure success in the food service industry and in their personal lives.

Since the program began in 2001, over 1,400 people have graduated. Those students have gone on to find employment at more than 200 local culinary institutions including restaurants, school cafeterias, retirement communities, day care centers, corporate dining halls, catering companies, bakeries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, banquet halls, Cincinnati International Airport, Cincinnati Museum Center, and Jack Cincinnati Casino.

- In SFY 2015, Cincinnati Cooks graduated 94 students
- 90% employed after one year
- 143 students graduated in SFY 2016



Following graduation from Cincinnati COOKS! Students are eligible to enroll in our Second Course program. The eight-week course provides advanced skills training for management opportunities and employment in fine dining restaurants. Graduates from Cincinnati COOKS! And Second Course can continue their education at Cincinnati State, entering with 33 credits toward earning their Kitchen Management certificate.