



Testimony: HB 49 (Smith)
FY 2018-19 Biennial Budget
Judy Mobley, President and CEO
Children's Hunger Alliance
May 24, 2017

Background

Good Afternoon Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Tavares, and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid. My name is Judy Mobley, and I am the President and CEO of Children's Hunger Alliance, a statewide 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 for the FY 2018-19 budget.

According to the USDA, Ohio has the sixth highest rate of food insecurity in the United States. Currently, 1 in 5 or more than 600,000 of Ohio's children are hungry. This is a staggering figure. As recently as 10 years ago this figure was 1 in 6. Studies show that lack of proper nutrition negatively impacts a child's overall mental and physical development which can lead to performance problems in school. If we cannot provide our children with enough food to eat we cannot 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 access receive healthy food, nutrition education and physical activity. We are a statewide organization with a total operating budget of \$16 million that has done work in all 88 Ohio counties to combat childhood hunger. We are currently one of the largest sponsors of the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program in Ohio administered by the Ohio Department of Education. This program enables us to provide healthy meals and snacks for children who are at-risk of food insecurity through afterschool programs, in-home child care providers, and daycare centers.

Children's Hunger Alliance provides approximately 5 million meals and snacks a year to Ohio's children through our direct sponsorship of over 260 afterschool meal sites, 12 daycare centers, and nearly 900 in-home child care providers. In your packets, you will find information that shows the locations of these programs county by county, so that you can see geographically the reach of our work currently.

In Southeastern Ohio, nearly 1 in 3 children face food insecurity. Given the widespread geography of Appalachia, kids too often cannot walk to a local recreation center or library afterschool like they can in urban areas to receive a meal or snack. That's why we are currently working on an asset mapping project in six counties – Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton – to determine the most efficient routes and partners to get food to these kids who urgently need it.

Our statewide work with school breakfast, afterschool programs and summer feeding programs allows us to meet children where they are and ensure they receive healthy meals *before* and *after* school each day - and during the summer months. We want to be sure we are reaching children who need our help regardless of whether they live in a metropolitan area or rural Appalachia.

As mentioned, Children's Hunger Alliance works with schools to increase participation in school breakfast programs since only 56% of children eligible for a free or reduced lunch currently participate in school breakfast. We partner with school districts to evaluate their existing programs and implement best practices that increase breakfast participation in a cost effective manner that works for their school.

We also know that only 10 percent of children who rely on school breakfasts and lunches, have access to meals during the summer. We work to increase access to summer meal programs offered at locations such as community centers and day camps. We have helped organizations develop mobile feeding programs that transport meals to different locations so kids have a better chance of receiving the meals they need close to home. We have also applied to become a summer meal sponsor ourselves which will allow us to offer summer programs in areas of greatest need.



Finally, Children's Hunger Alliance educates children and families on healthy food choices and physical activity. Our Nutrition Education Team helps in-home child care providers learn how to plan meals and offer healthy food options to the children in their care. Children's Hunger Alliance also certifies providers in the Department of Health's Ohio Healthy Programs, which ensures providers offer children in their care fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, protein and dairy. We also offer nutrition education and physical activity programming at afterschool and summer nutrition programs to help children make healthy food choices and stay active and just this Fiscal Year have begun nutrition education work in daycare centers.

FY 2018-19 Budget request

Through a grant of \$1.5 million from the Walmart National Foundation, Children's Hunger Alliance engaged Community Research Partners to complete a comprehensive Statewide Child Nutrition Needs Assessment. An Executive Summary of the assessment is contained in your packets. Through this assessment, we have been able to prioritize counties throughout the state that have high rates of child poverty and food insecurity, yet low participation in federal nutrition programs. These counties, many of which are located in the Southeastern portion of Ohio, represent an opportunity for Children's Hunger Alliance to meet a critical need for tens of thousands of Ohio children who need our services.

In order to expand our work and be in a position to meet the needs of additional food insecure children in our state, Children's Hunger Alliance is requesting \$2 million in TANF block grant funding over the FY 2018-19 biennium. This funding will allow us to expand programming in our four core program areas – early childhood, school and summer nutrition, afterschool and nutrition education and physical activity. A copy of our budget request is included in your packets. 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 biennium.



While we recognize that many worthy programs are requesting funding in this budget cycle, and limited resources are available, it is important to note that funding of Children's Hunger Alliance programs represents an excellent return on investment for Ohio taxpayers. For every \$1 spent on our programs, the State of Ohio is able to leverage \$3 of federal child nutrition funds.

In conclusion, Children's Hunger Alliance plays a unique role in Ohio's hunger relief system. Receiving state funding would allow us to expand our work and provide vital services to address childhood hunger in high need areas throughout Ohio. Research shows that providing these programs to at-risk children today will contribute to their overall short- and long-term health, will improve academic performance, and will result in fewer medical visits.

Chairman Hackett 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.

