



Children's Hunger Alliance

Testimony: Sub. HB 110

FY 2022-23 Biennial Budget

Judy Mobley, President & CEO

Children's Hunger Alliance

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Background

Good morning Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am Judy Mobley, President and CEO of Children's Hunger Alliance (CHA), a non-profit organization dedicated to the alleviation of childhood hunger in Ohio. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to you today regarding our funding request in the FY 2022-23 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 2018 food insecurity statistics from Feeding America, Ohio ranked 8th highest by percentage of children at 18.1% or nearly 1 in 5, and 5th highest based on the actual number of children with more than 489,000 of Ohio's children experiencing hunger. These numbers have dramatically worsened over the past year due to the pandemic. Feeding America projects that in 2020 the percentage of Ohio children experiencing food insecurity will stand at 27.1% or over 1 in 4 children. This equates to more than 700,000 children, a staggering increase of over 200,000 children from the 2018 number.

Children's Hunger Alliance has expanded its partnerships and the number of feeding sites to meet the growing need for our services. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have served more children than at any other time during our 50-year history. In FY20 we provided 9.4 million meals through our sponsorship of afterschool programs, summer meal sites, family childcare homes, and daycare centers. Additionally, we fulfill our mission through collaborating with schools to enhance their school breakfast programs, and by providing children with nutrition education. We are currently one of the largest and most geographically diverse sponsors in Ohio of the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) administered by the Ohio Department of Education. These federal programs enable us to provide healthy meals and snacks to children struggling with poverty. We currently sponsor a total of 1,130 meal sites - 350 afterschool programs, 180 summer sites, 50 childcare centers and 550 family childcare providers.

In addition to our CACFP and SFSP sponsorship work we have a team that works across the state with schools to increase breakfast participation. In Ohio only 59% 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 to 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. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic we have worked with schools to maximize their distribution of food to students through all child nutrition programs including breakfast, lunch, afterschool and on weekends to ensure food access regardless of the operational model of their school.

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 qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch and rely on their school for food, have access to free meals during the summer. In addition to our own USDA Summer Food Service Sponsorship launched in 2020 to meet growing needs, we also work with other partners to increase access to summer meal programs offered at locations such as community centers, churches, schools and day camps. We have implemented mobile feeding and also 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 2022-23 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.

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 2022-23 biennium. This funding was included by the legislature in Section 307.109 of Am. Sub. HB 166 as an earmark in the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services budget at \$1,175,000 in FY 2020 and FY 2021 from 600689 TANF Block Grant. The legislature's support for this funding has allowed CHA 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. Additionally, it has allowed us to expand to provide meals to children on the weekends and over school breaks. Some of the key highlights of the work funded through TANF in the current biennium include:

- Establishment of a holiday and weekend meal program
- Expansion of food access within sponsored childcare centers, family childcare homes, and afterschool programs
- Establishment of Summer Food Service Program sponsorship, providing additional food access during the summer months including expansion of mobile meal delivery
- Continued nutrition and physical education programs within childcare centers, afterschool, and summer programs
- Establishment and implementation of software to be used for outreach - increasing access to child nutrition programs, specifically school breakfast programs as well as holiday and weekend meals
- Increased program awareness through development of videos, community outreach, and program materials

I want to thank Governor DeWine and his staff for recognizing the importance of our work and for including CHA in the introduced version of HB 110 at a level of \$1 million per fiscal year out of 600689 TANF block grant dollars. While we greatly appreciate the Governor's support and inclusion of these earmarked dollars, due to the increasing need for our services, CHA respectfully requested that the House restore the TANF earmark to the \$1,175,000 annually contained in Amended Substitute House Bill 166. I am very pleased to note that the House passed version of Substitute House Bill 110 included an amendment to make this requested change. We would respectfully request that the Senate support the House passed CHA funding language.

We recognize that many worthy organizations are requesting funding in this budget cycle, but it is important to note that funding Children's Hunger Alliance represents an excellent return on investment for Ohio taxpayers. Our direct sponsorship work

leveraged over \$19 million of federal nutrition funds back to Ohio in federal fiscal years 2019 and 2020. 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 an additional \$20 million of federal child nutrition funds bringing the total dollars leveraged to approximately \$39 million.

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

Chair Dolan and Committee members, I want to thank you for your time and for your support of our funding request in the House passed version of Sub. House Bill 110.