



Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Julie Chase-Morefield, President and CEO
May 25, 2023
Amended House Bill 33

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to provide testimony on the pressing issue of hunger in Ohio.

My name is Julie Chase-Morefield and I have the honor of serving as President and CEO of the Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio. Second Harvest serves individuals and families in Crawford, Erie, Huron, and Lorain Counties with a mission to grow hope in our region by creating pathways to nutritious food. Throughout 2022, our network of over 130 community partners delivered 11 million pounds of food through 150 programs and served 114,748 people; over half of this number were seniors and children.

To date, we have witnessed a staggering 46.9% increase in the number of people seeking food assistance over our 2019 pre-pandemic numbers for the same time period (Jan-May). This is an alarming trend that requires us to seek your help to meet the escalating need. I urgently request your support of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks' funding request. Your support would ensure the continuity and solvency of our state's emergency food system by securing sufficient resources to acquire food and effectively address the persistently high demand for food assistance, given the unprecedented surge in food costs and inflation.

The SNAP Emergency Allotments successfully provided stability to low-income residents in our service area throughout the pandemic. With the additional benefits, recipients experienced reduced reliance on food banks, as they had the financial means to procure nutritional essentials from grocery stores. While we knew the benefits would eventually end, the timing hit especially hard during historic inflation and an overall climate of economic uncertainty, placing a considerable burden on the charitable sector. Regrettably, this situation disproportionately affected the most vulnerable segments of our population, including seniors, children, and individuals with disabilities. The repercussions extend beyond Ohio's economy, impacting our essential food bank network.

As of Friday, May 19, 2023, 60% of our warehouse was empty. Due to diminished federal commodities, reduced donations, and disrupted supply chains, we have had to purchase food at inflated market prices to bridge the gaps. Throughout the past year, we have diligently kept our members apprised of the evolving situation within their respective districts, inviting them to witness first-hand the challenges we face in sourcing food and serving our communities through mobile drive-thru pantries at schools and parks. Representatives from our service region have traveled to Columbus, sharing stories of hardship and economic crisis caused by the pandemic. It is important to acknowledge that the circumstances we face will not be easily or swiftly resolved, as past

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recessions have demonstrated. Moreover, the economic ramifications of the pandemic are ongoing and have no precedent. The public policy actions enacted during the pandemic helped lessen negative impacts and unequivocally proved that such measures lift families, seniors, and children out of poverty, significantly reduce hunger rates within these groups, stimulate the economy, and thus should be continued to ensure the prosperity of our communities.

On behalf of Second Harvest, and as the Chair of Ohio Association of Foodbanks, I respectfully request your support of the following:

Support for amendment SC0437, an additional \$10.45 million per year over the as introduced budget, to support 100 million pounds of food purchases through the Ohio Food and Agricultural Clearance programs and help offset the skyrocketing cost of food and transportation in order to meet the record level of increasing demand.

Support for amendment SC 0227 provides a modest temporary minimum monthly benefit of just \$50 for up to 70,000 low-income seniors on SNAP whose benefits dropped from \$281 per month to \$23.00 per month (pre-pandemic benefit level). This amendment appropriates \$21,415,000 in each fiscal year in GRF ALI 600564, SNAP State Supplement. Example: The state would provide a senior \$27/month ensuring they have \$50 a month or \$1.66/day to eat. If a person receives \$42/month in benefits the state would provide \$8 a month in state funds to bring this person's food assistance benefit to \$50 a month.

If this supplemental state food assistance benefit keeps 329 seniors aging in place and at home, instead of going into a nursing home at a cost of \$65,000 per person, per year, the program becomes cost neutral.

We all know what is at stake and how frail recovery can be if people don't get basic needs met. Food, as an essential basic need, can be a force multiplier and allow Ohioans to get back on their feet, and Ohio on the path to a strong and lasting recovery. We know we can't do it without your help and support, and we are grateful for your partnership. Working together, we will create a brighter future for all by cultivating a healthy, hunger-free community.

Respectfully Submitted,



Juliana Chase-Morefield
President & CEO