



**Greater Cleveland
Food Bank**

GreaterClevelandFoodBank.org

May 25, 2023

Ohio Senate Finance Committee
House Bill 33

Kristin Warzocha, President and CEO, Greater Cleveland Food Bank
May 25, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am Kristin Warzocha, President and CEO of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank (GCFB). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the state of hunger in Ohio.

First, on behalf of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, I would like to thank you for your support of Ohio's food banks and emergency hunger relief programs. The appropriations last year of \$15 million for Ohio fresh food and \$25 million for additional purchases have been critical to our mission to ensure that everyone in our communities has the nutritious food they need every day. Now more than ever, people are turning to Food Banks for help. We are serving more people than we have in history, and are bracing ourselves for the full impact that ongoing inflation and the end of the emergency SNAP allotments will have on families and seniors across our 6-county service territory.

In our last fiscal year, which ended in September 2022, nearly 350,000 Northeast Ohio children, seniors, working people and families turned to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and our network of over 1,000 partner agencies for help. This is significantly higher than before the pandemic when 300,000 individuals turned to GCFB for help each year. In the last two months alone, GCFB has served 20,000 more individuals than the same time last year.

With millions of Ohioans struggling to stretch their wages or fixed incomes, in the case of seniors, to pay for increased costs for everything from food to rent to utilities, we don't foresee a decrease in need this year or the next. State support will be critical to help meet the unprecedented need for food assistance across the state. For that reason, on behalf of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and the communities we serve, I urge this committee to support amendment SC0437 for the purchases of an additional \$10.45 million per year, over the budget proposal as passed by the Ohio House of Representatives, to support the purchases of another 100 million pounds of food through the Ohio Food and Agricultural Clearance programs to help feed our hungry friends and neighbors. This would provide \$50 million yearly for food that is then distributed throughout the state's food bank network.

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Member of:



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As we address the urgent and unprecedented need for food assistance, we must also look ahead to address the underlying causes of food insecurity. A community wide effort is underway to create Community Resource Centers to support individuals in need of assistance, and provide "one-stop-shops," of Northeast Ohio's most effective nonprofits. These organizations will collaborate and co-locate to provide local residents a hand up to employment and other services that will lead to long-term economic stability and empower people to thrive.

The first Community Resource Center will be located at 15500 S Waterloo Road, in a renovated facility that, until recently, hosted the Greater Cleveland Food Bank's food distribution center. This Resource Center will be client-centric and services will be provided based on both national data and feedback from thousands of struggling Northeast Ohioans. It will include an on-site health clinic and employment resources to help connect people to available jobs, along with other resources.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, I urge you to maintain the \$10 million in ARPA funding for this project, which will pay for both renovation and programmatic expenses at these Centers, included in the budget proposal passed by the Ohio House of Representative. Together we can end hunger today, tomorrow, and for a lifetime.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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