



February 27, 2025

**Ohio House Children & Human Services Committee
Written Testimony on H.B. 96
Dan Flowers, CEO, Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank**

Chairwoman White, Vice Chairwoman Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and distinguished members of the Children & Human Services committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB96.

It has been an honor to serve as CEO of the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank for the past 22 years, providing critical resources for food insecure families and individuals in Carroll, Holmes, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, Tuscarawas and Wayne counties. In my tenure, I have witnessed the incredible partnership our network of food banks has forged with our local communities, our donors and our legislative representatives. Partnership with Ohio food manufacturers and farmers has been made possible through the innovative and sensible policies that created the Ohio Food Program and Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program, a public-private partnership that has worked with efficiency for more than 30 years.

As you begin your work on H.B. 96, I would like to first express our network's overwhelming gratitude for these programs, which have provided important food supply to our neighbors, but continue to provide the healthiest and most nutritious food we distribute, all while helping Ohio's farmers clear unmarketable apples, onions, cabbages, etc. in what I believe to be one of the most efficient hunger-fighting programs in the U.S. Last year, these programs accounted for 23% of the food distributed by the Foodbank; the healthiest foods we provided to our communities. I would like to share a few other points of context as you consider our network's request to include additional financial support for the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program in the state operating budget, H.B.96.

- The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank provided access to food for 31.4 million meals in 2024 – the largest year in the organization's history. This is a 16% increase over 2023 and a 15% increase over 2020.
- Our local network of more than 600 hunger-relief programs placed 10% more orders in 2024 compared to 2023 in attempt to meet the needs of our community.
- More than 7,000 neighbors were connected with services beyond food directly through our Foodbank in 2024.
- On average, 16,000 children were served each month in 2024 through our Feeding Kids Initiative.
- Nearly 668,000 meals, a 7% increase compared to 2023, were distributed to older adults, and our mobile pop-up pantry distributed more than 314,000 meals in 2024.
- Neighbors utilize our services as they continue to struggle with transportation and health barriers to food access, high costs for food, housing, utilities and health care.

- Hunger in Ohio 2024, a study published by the Ohio Association of Foodbanks found that 57.8% of neighbors served though the network had to choose between food or medicine/health care.
- The Ohio Agricultural Clearance program provides vital, healthy foods to our neighbors, and in 2024 attributed to our foodbank's highest produce distribution ever; nearly 11 million pounds.
- Federal food programs accounted for 24% of the food distributed by the Foodbank in 2024, and those programs, as well as critical benefits for food insecure families, are currently at risk.

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of neighbors we serve, we ask you to consider an additional investment to provide meaningful support to the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program, enabling Ohio's local food banks and food pantries to continue to be the places Ohioans turn to when in crisis.

With gratitude,



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