

Hunger Network in Ohio



Chair Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer, and members of the Community Revitalization Committee,

My name is Deacon Nick Bates, and I serve as the director of the Hunger Network in Ohio an ecumenical ministry that seeks to end hunger by addressing the root causes of poverty in Ohio. I am an ordained Deacon in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

All families are beloved in the eyes of God. In Jesus' time, the Temple Law often created clear cut lines of who is in and who is out. Prostitutes were obviously considered to be outside of the ethical bounds, but Jesus turns it around in Luke 7 and identifies this sin of the Pharisee, for a lack of hospitality, as inappropriate. The Temple law identifies that a person shouldn't work on the Sabbath, but then Jesus in Matthew 12 conducts works of charity and mercy on the Sabbath to guarantee that others are fed. And of course, in Luke 10, Jesus shares with us the story of the Good Samaritan. The important part of this parable is that Jesus uplifts the Samaritans – a group considered less than an outcast by the majority who held power.

Simply put, when the world defines a person or a group as less than pure, less than good, or less complete, Jesus walks over and stands with them.

We are in opposition to natural family month because we have parents of all shapes and sizes. We have grandparents raising grandkids. We have parents in same-sex relationships that are loving and kind and showing up at Church every Sunday. We have single parents who are knocking it out of the park. All of these families deserve love and respect and not divided by number, race, economic status, gender, or creed.

Raising kids is hard enough. As the father of a 15- and 10-year-old I rely on my LGBTQIA+ neighbors, my single-parent neighbors, my elderly neighbors with kids already grown, my adopted neighbors, and my neighbors who never plan to have kids to regularly to help me raise my kids as coaches, teachers, Scout leaders, mentors, and friends. Their families are just as valid and important as mine.

Instead of discussing a bill that can rank families in arbitrary ways, I encourage you to have Ohio families back by investing in proposals like Governor DeWine's Child Tax Credit and fair school funding so that we can guarantee every kid the best formation in childhood for success and economic stability as an adult.

Thank you for your time, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.