



**Ohio House Finance Committee  
House Bill 96  
Ohio Food Bank Funding  
Matt Habash, President/CEO Mid-Ohio Food Collective  
March 13, 2025**

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla and Ranking Minority Member Sweeney and members of the Committee, I am Matt Habash, President and CEO of Mid-Ohio Food Collective. Today, I am submitting this written testimony as an interested party to House Bill 96, the state operating budget. I will highlight the support needed for funding for Ohio's food banks and related services to address hunger and poverty.

Mid-Ohio Food Collective is the largest food relief agency in Ohio and one of the largest in the nation, serving 20 urban, rural and Appalachian counties from Chillicothe to Marion and Marysville to Belmont, including Columbus. To give you some context of our work to connect nutritious food to those who are struggling, last fiscal year Mid-Ohio Food Collective distributed nearly 85 million pounds of food – enough for over 193,000 meals every day, serving more than 500,000 children, seniors, veterans, disabled and others facing food insecurity.

For more insight into our service numbers and offerings, attached to this testimony is our Fiscal Year 2024 Key Stats document. This document touches on the tip of MOFC's offerings and impact; please feel free to reach out to MOFC staff if you are interested in learning more about our operations. Contact information for our advocacy team is included at the end of this testimony.

Along with our 12 fellow foodbanks and 3,600 agencies across the state of Ohio, we are respectfully requesting additional financial support through the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program (OFPACP) to continue to provide critical nutrition and supportive services for the Ohioans we serve. Specifically, we and Ohio's foodbank network are requesting an increase in funding for OFPACP from the \$24.55 million per year appropriated in HB96 currently to \$36.98 million per year. This reflects appropriation levels in the prior state budget with a small increase to reflect inflation and increased service visits.

Not only has Ohio's hunger relief network provided take-home groceries for food insecure Ohioans for decades, but the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program provides a secondary market for Ohio farmers, growers and producers to sell unmarketable and surplus product, paying farmers and producers to harvest, pack and send product to be distributed through the Ohio hunger relief network. This allows local farmers and producers to avoid layoffs, keep their workers for longer, and support their local food system and community.

As shared on our Key Stats document, MOFC distributed over 50 million pounds of fresh food throughout our service in FY24, 63 percent of our total distribution. The OFPACP accounted for nearly 23 percent of total food distribution, the highest percentage of government support for MOFC. In short, the program is critical to our mission of providing fresh, healthy food for our customers. This is especially true as we, just like Ohio consumers, face elevated food acquisition and distribution costs.

In providing fresh food we are able to positively impact the well-being of our customers. Through our assets in addition to the MOFC food bank, we help address the factors that impact the daily lives of our customers. We take a holistic approach to service because we know hunger does not work in isolation and that we must address the daily challenges that contribute to hunger and poverty.

We ask for support of an amendment to increase state funding to \$36.98 million per year to the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program. This will help ensure continued capability to meet elevated need in our communities in our service area and through the state food bank network. Please consider and support additional funding for the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program in House Bill 96.

Again, we are happy to provide additional insight into our operations for any member who would like to learn more about MOFC and our services. Thank you for your time and consideration and please reach out with any questions. We appreciate your careful consideration of the Ohio food bank network's funding request to support a hunger-free, healthier Ohio.

Thank you,

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