



Michelle M. Brown Children's Hunger Alliance FY26-27 Operating Budget Testimony

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the House Substitute version of HB 96.

My name is Michelle Brown, and I am the CEO of Children's Hunger Alliance, a statewide non-profit founded in 1970, currently serving 76 counties in Ohio. CHA uniquely connects children to food right where they are: at in-home childcare providers, childcare centers, school, weekends, afterschool, and summer programs.

While the Governor included us in his proposed budget at our current funding level of \$7.5 million across the biennium, this House substitute bill appropriates \$3 million across the biennium (Substitute House Bill 96, Page 4157, lines 118158-118164). **This is a 60% reduction from our current level of funding.**

This is a devastating cut for the thousands of children who will sit at school hungry, and at home hungry as a result. They will experience behavioral and academic issues, and their long-term health and productivity will likely suffer as a result.

We already sit around the table having to decide which kids we can provide food to and which will have to wait – though they all have an urgent need for proper nutrition. **At our current funding levels, there is a waitlist of over 80 schools. The proposed decrease in funding will cut 2.8 million meals and more than double our waitlist to over 160 schools.**



There is no overlap in our services and others – there's just greater need than any one organization can meet and we are the leader in coordinating services. Further, CHA has a proven track record for efficient and effective use of funds with a 91% direct program expense rate.

We have a 55-year history of strict compliance, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing programs. Our accountability is unmatched. We work all around the state, supporting small businesses such as in-home providers and childcare centers when they often have no one else in their area that can help them.

Through the last operating budget, we were able to provide 10.8 million meals to 160,000 children across over 1,800 partner sites in FY24 alone, the largest impact in the organization's history.

Chair Stewart and Committee members, I would respectfully request that you support the attached amendment to be sponsored by Representative John which would increase CHA's funding by \$2.25 million in each fiscal year of the biennium to restore vital services for children and include it in the omnibus amendment for inclusion in the final House passed version of HB 96.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our request, and I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

_____ moved to amend as follows:

In line 118159, delete \$1,500,000 and insert \$3,750,000.

The motion was _____ agreed to.

SYNOPSIS

Department of Job and Family Services

Increases TANF appropriation in line item 600689, TANF Block Grant by \$2,250,000 in FY 2026 and by \$2,250,000 in FY 2027 to total \$3,750,000 in FY 2026 and \$3,750,000 in FY 2027. The appropriation will assist the Children's Hunger Alliance with meal sponsorship, consultations and nutrition education, school district nutrition programs, after school nutrition programs, and summer nutrition programs.