



1632 Oak Street
Columbus, OH 43205
614-664-7483

Mailing Address:
United Way of Central Ohio
215 N Front Street
Columbus, OH 43215



Will Petrik, RISE Together Innovation Institute
House Finance Committee
Testimony on HB 96 (SFY 2026-27 Operating Budget)
April 3, 2025

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, my name is Will Petrik. I serve as the Director of Policy & Advocacy at RISE Together Innovation Institute.

At RISE Together, we believe that every child deserves the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. No family should have to choose between paying rent, putting food on the table, or affording childcare. Yet today, too many families in Ohio are struggling to make ends meet.

The Problem: Too many families are struggling with rising costs and low-wage jobs
Housing costs have surged, wages haven't kept pace, and too many working people find themselves forced to make impossible choices between rent, childcare, healthcare, and groceries. In Franklin County alone, 39% of households are struggling just to get by.

Unfortunately, the proposed state budget could make things worse for many of our neighbors. It could take food and healthcare away from residents and provide fewer resources for affordable housing and public schools.

The proposed budget could:

- **Take healthcare coverage away from 770,000 Ohioans**, including over 115,000 adults in Franklin County, by including language that could end Medicaid expansion;
- **Harm local efforts to build more affordable housing and address homelessness** by effectively eliminating the Ohio Housing Trust Fund.
- **Make it harder for people to keep food on the table** by reducing funding to Ohio foodbanks by \$15 million over the next 2 years;

Taking away healthcare and funding for food and affordable housing will push more families into insecurity and instability. At a time when the cost of groceries and rent continue



to rise, now is not the time to pull back support for affordable housing and foodbanks across the state that help make sure our neighbors don't go hungry. Taking away healthcare (pushing people off Medicaid) will mean hundreds of thousands of residents will no longer be able to afford prescriptions and the healthcare they need. It would push more people into medical debt and emergency rooms, straining our healthcare system and local resources.

The proposed budget also removes critical provisions that would have provided relief to working families with young children. The Governor's proposed refundable Child Tax Credit would have provided up to \$1,000 per child under the age of seven and helped parents afford necessities like diapers, groceries, and gas. **This budget eliminates tax relief for working families.** The latest proposal also removes a provision that would have made childcare more affordable for working parents. The provision would have expanded publicly funded childcare to include more hard-working parents. We urge you to restore these proposals to help more families afford childcare and provide families with some financial relief.

We need a budget that reflects our shared values—a budget that prioritizes dignity, economic opportunity, and the well-being of all Ohioans. That's why we call on you to support the following budget priorities:

- **Make sure every Ohioan can get the healthcare they need.** Please remove the trigger language and protect Medicaid expansion in Ohio.
- **Help families put food on the table.** Please fully fund food banks in Ohio.
- **Restore funding to address homelessness and build more affordable housing** by restoring the Ohio Housing Trust Fund.
- **Restore tax relief for families who most need it.** Please restore the refundable Child Tax Credit.
- **Restore the Governor's provision to help more families afford childcare.** Please restore the expansion of publicly funded childcare.

The choices you make in this budget will shape the future of our region and our state. We urge you to stand with the people in Franklin County and across Ohio by passing a budget that truly supports dignity and economic security for all. Thank you for your time and consideration.

