

Franklin County Commissioner Erica Crawley
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 Erica Crawley, and I am honored to serve as a Franklin County Commissioner. Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony on behalf of over 1.3 million people in Franklin County.

At the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, our mission is to provide high-quality services to support the well-being, safety, and economic mobility of all residents. Guided by a commitment to *Every Resident, Every Day*, we work to create a thriving community where every resident has opportunities to succeed.

At its core, the state budget is a statement of our values. It tells us who and what we prioritize as a state. Today, too many people—especially families with young children—are being left behind. In Franklin County alone, 39% of households are struggling to make ends meet.¹ They are forced to make impossible choices between rent, childcare, healthcare, and groceries. These are not just numbers; they represent kids who are going to be hungry, older adults choosing between medication and utilities, and working people who contribute to our communities, but still live paycheck to paycheck.

I am deeply disappointed that the budget proposal released by the House Finance Committee removes critical provisions that would have provided much-needed relief to families. The refundable Child Tax Credit, which would have helped parents afford essentials like diapers, formula, and childcare, has been eliminated. It would have provided an average annual tax cut of \$940 for 38,500 working families with children age 0-6 in Franklin County. The latest budget proposal also removes a provision that would have made childcare more affordable for working parents. Specifically, the expansion of eligibility for publicly funded childcare would help working parents stay in the workforce and ensure more children receive quality care was removed from the bill. I urge lawmakers to restore these provisions in the budget to ensure that all Ohio families have the support they need to thrive.

¹ Will Petrik and Rob Moore, "Poverty and Economic Insecurity in Franklin County," RISE Together Innovation Institute and Scioto Analysis December 2024, <https://bit.ly/3F6ktQP>

I am also concerned that the proposed state budget could make life even harder for many of the residents we serve. It threatens to take healthcare away from up to 770,000 Ohioans—including 115,479 adults in Franklin County—by including language that could trigger the end of Medicaid expansion.² Losing Medicaid would mean families could no longer afford prescriptions, preventive care, or life-saving treatments. It would push more people into medical debt and emergency rooms, straining our healthcare system and local resources.

The latest budget proposal would also eliminate the primary source of state funding for local homelessness and affordable housing programs at a time when rents have increased dramatically and we're seeing alarming rates of evictions and homelessness. Gutting the Ohio Housing Trust Fund will mean more residents on the streets and fewer people having the security and stability they need to reach their full potential.

It also includes a reduction in funding to Ohio's food banks by \$15 million over the next two years. Food banks are often the last line of defense for families facing hunger, and these cuts would make it even harder for the food bank in Central Ohio to meet the rising demand. No one in Ohio should have to worry about where their next meal is coming from, especially when we have the resources to prevent it.

As you determine budget priorities, I urge you to make decisions that reflect our shared values—dignity, opportunity, and security for all Ohioans.

That means:

- Protecting access to healthcare by removing the trigger language that threatens Medicaid expansion.
- Fully funding food banks so that no Ohioan goes hungry.
- Fully fund the Ohio Housing Trust Fund so more people have safe, stable housing
- Restore the refundable Child Tax Credit to support tax relief for working families.
- Make childcare more affordable by restoring the Governor's proposal to include more families in the publicly funded childcare program.

The choices you make in this budget will shape Ohio's future. I ask you to stand with the people of Franklin County and communities across the state by passing a budget that supports the well-being and economic security of all Ohioans. Thank you.

² 115,479 estimate is from the Ohio Department of Medicaid February Medicaid enrollment numbers of the Medicaid expansion population, <https://bit.ly/4gKlkog>