



**May 28, 2025**  
**Ohio Senate Finance Committee**  
**Written Testimony on H.B. 96**  
**Dan Flowers, CEO, Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank**

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chairman Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and distinguished members of the Senate Finance committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on Amended Substitute House Bill 96.

It has been an honor to serve as CEO of the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank for the past 22 years, which provides critical resources for food insecure families and individuals in Carroll, Holmes, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, Tuscarawas and Wayne counties. In my tenure, I have witnessed the incredible partnership our network of food banks has forged with our local communities, our donors and our legislative representatives. Partnership with Ohio food manufacturers and farmers has been made possible through the innovative and sensible policies that created the Ohio Food Program and Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program, a public-private partnership that has worked with efficiency for more than 30 years.

As you continue your work on the state operating budget, H.B. 96, I would like to first express our network's overwhelming gratitude for these programs, which have provided critical food resources to our neighbors and continue to supply the healthiest and most nutritious food we distribute, all while helping Ohio's farmers clear unmarketable produce in what I believe to be one of the most efficient hunger-fighting programs in the U.S.

Last year, these programs accounted for 23% of the food distributed by the Foodbank; the most nourishing foods we provided to our communities. I would like to share a few other points of context as you consider our network's request to include additional financial support for the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program in H.B.96.

- The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank provided access to food for 31.4 million meals in 2024 – the largest year in our organization's history. This is a 16% increase over 2023 and a 15% increase over 2020.
- Our local network of more than 620 hunger-relief programs placed 10% more orders in 2024 compared to 2023 in an attempt to meet the needs of our community.
- On average, 16,000 children were served each month in 2024 through our Feeding Kids Initiative.
- Nearly 668,000 meals, a 7% increase compared to 2023, were distributed to older adults in 2024.
- Our mobile pop-up pantry distributed more than 314,000 meals in 2024.
- Neighbors continue to utilize our services as they struggle with transportation and health barriers and high costs for food, housing, utilities and health care.
- Hunger in Ohio 2024, a study published by the Ohio Association of Foodbanks found that 57.8% of neighbors served though the network had to choose between food or medicine/health care.
- Federal food programs accounted for 24% of the food distributed by the Foodbank in 2024, and those programs, as well as critical benefits for food insecure families, are currently at risk.
- The Ohio Agricultural Clearance program provides vital, healthy foods to our neighbors, and in 2024 attributed to our foodbank's highest produce distribution ever; nearly 11 million pounds.



Together with our 11 fellow foodbanks and 3,600 partner agencies across the state of Ohio, we respectfully request an additional \$4.93 million per year through the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program for a total investment of \$29.48 million per fiscal year. This investment will allow us to continue to provide the vital nutrition and supportive services we provide for the Ohioans we serve. Not only has Ohio's hunger relief network provide take-home groceries for food insecure Ohioans for decades, but the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program have provided a secondary market for Ohio farmers, growers and producers to sell their unmarketable and surplus product, paying farmers and producers to harvest, pack and send that product to be distributed through the Ohio hunger relief network. Local producers and farmers have shared that this allows them to avoid layoffs, keep their workers for longer, and support their local food system and community.

Expected and potential funding cuts from federal and state sources could result in 3 million fewer pounds of food (about 7% of our total distribution) reaching our region this year. With demand surpassing pandemic levels and last year being our food bank's highest year of food distribution, this reduction is deeply concerning for both our food bank and the region.

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of neighbors we serve, we ask you to consider an additional investment to provide meaningful support to the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program, enabling Ohio's local food banks and food pantries to continue to be the places Ohioans turn to when in crisis.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Dan R. Flowers".

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