



Children's Hunger Alliance

CHA FY26-27 Operating Budget Testimony

Senate Finance Committee

June 5, 2025

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on House Bill 96.

My name is Michelle Brown, CEO Children's Hunger Alliance, a statewide non-profit, currently serving 76 counties across Ohio for a total of 10.8 million meals last year. CHA receives our funding through TANF, which we know was created to support low-income families with children. By directly connecting children to meals to ensure they receive proper nutrition to grow and succeed, we demonstrate what it means to properly utilize these funds.

We have a proven track record for efficient and effective use of funds with a 90% direct program expense rate. Our staff live and 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.

I want to use my time to share personal stories from our partners participating in our Weekend Meals program and the children who will go hungry in Ohio with a cut to our funding.

Emily Morgan- Middletown Creekview Elementary, Butler County:

"Without this program, many students would not eat from lunch on Friday until breakfast on Monday. It saves lives...It may seem silly or trivial, but to them it's a huge deal."

Jenna Jewell- Carlisle Local Schools, Warren County:

"Students and families benefit from this program because it provides a consistent food source for students. Most students I work with have absolutely no food at home. This program helps ensure that these children are getting the nutrients they need."

Mansfield City Schools, Richland County:



“Before Children's Hunger Alliance, we worried about some of our youngest kids coming back to school on Monday hungry and unable to focus because they hadn’t eaten well, or at all, over the weekend.”

Jill Ackerman- Lima City Schools, Allen County:

"It's a relief for parents with rising food costs, and it's also a peace of mind for the children to know that when they're home that they're going to have some food to eat...It helps with mental health, and hopefully, it'll help with attendance and keep them on track with their grades.”

Amesville Elementary in Athens County praised the process of CHA boxes being portable and filled with larger quantities of healthy food than they could source themselves. One father had a mental health break and told the school, “Where the end of my rope was, is where you were able to step in and help with food.”

Clara E. Westropp Elementary School, Cuyahoga County:

“Friday’s attendance has improved because that is when they get their meal boxes. I have a student who would come in on Mondays tired and distracted. He would put his head down during morning work and struggled to focus on activities we were doing. Since the Weekend Meals Program, this student now arrives on Mondays with more energy and a brighter mood.”

Can these children and their caretakers count on your support for this basic need?

We respectfully request your support of our omnibus amendment for an additional \$1.25 million per fiscal year, restoring us to flat funding.

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