

## Ohio Senate Finance Committee Testimony

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**Chairman Cirino**

**June 6, 2025**

**Joree Novotny**

**Executive Director, Ohio Association of Foodbanks**

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chairman Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. We serve as Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger through a robust network of 12 regional foodbanks and 3,600 local food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters in every county in Ohio.

I am here to say "thank you" to the Ohio Senate for maintaining funding of \$24.55 million in Substitute House Bill 96 to support Ohio's hunger relief system. This meaningful investment, coupled with your longstanding partnership, provides some of the most nutritious foods we offer - fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy, lean protein, and shelf-stable staples - to vulnerable Ohioans.

Importantly, we leverage this Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) earmarked funding by offering a third-party contribution to the state's required Maintenance of Effort, making your investment not only critical to address the needs of Ohioans but also playing an important role in helping the state meet its long-term obligations under federal law.

Food inflation continues to challenge families and hunger relief providers alike. We understand that this budget cycle and current fiscal environment requires strict fiscal responsibility, which is why an investment in our statewide network is prudent. Our partnership with the State of Ohio is built on decades of alliances, volunteerism, connections with the business and agricultural community, and logistics expertise. We maximize every public dollar through bulk purchasing, coordinated food sourcing, and efficient distribution systems that amplify impact and ensure food reaches even the most rural and underserved communities.

This funding will help us meet sustained high demand while navigating increased costs for food, fuel, and labor. More importantly, it helps ensure that Ohioans—children, seniors, people with disabilities, and working families—can access the nutrition they need to live healthy and stable lives. We remain grateful stewards of every investment you can make in our collective statewide food purchasing power – every dollar not only prevents hunger but supports food supply chain jobs and generates local economic activity.

Lastly, we want to thank the Senate for removing a House-added provision under Ohio Revised Code Section 5101.546 to require SNAP recipients to report their income and for county caseworkers to essentially redetermine eligibility every 30 days. This provision would have caused interruptions in SNAP benefit access, resulting in increased visits to the Foodbanks. Your action preserves program efficiency and access for those in need and eliminates the risk of additional strain on the Foodbanks system.

We are proud to be your partners in addressing hunger, and we remain committed to working alongside you to build a stronger, more resilient Ohio.

Thank you again for your investment and your continued support. Chairman Cirino and distinguished members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I would be pleased to answer any questions that members may have at this time.