

Testimony: HB 96
FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget
Senate Health Committee
Lauren Moran, Food Service Manager
Mansfield City Schools
May 13, 2025

Good afternoon Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking member Liston, and members of the Senate Finance Health Committee. My name is Lauren Moran, Food Service Manager Mansfield City Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of the FY 2026-27 budget request for the Children's Hunger Alliance.

The Mansfield City Schools is an example of how schools can successfully expand the number of students coming to school prepared to learn. We believe that students who come to school hungry or worried about where they will get their next meal are unable to focus on learning. We want to remove that barrier and help kids to be well fed and feel safe and secure.

Before partnering with CHA's Weekend Meals program, one of our biggest challenges was ensuring that students had access to nutritious foods outside of the program food that we could provide as a district. There is only federal and state funding for school breakfast, lunch, and afterschool snacks for qualifying programs. We know that so many of our children rely heavily on school meals during the week, and there was a clear gap on weekends. We worried about some of our youngest kids coming back to school on Monday tired, hungry, and unable to focus because they hadn't eaten well, or at all, over the weekend.

The CHA weekend program helps the district meet such basic needs for our students. The boxes are so much more than food; they are a sense of security, a sense of normalcy, and something to look forward to.

Potential cuts to the weekend meal program would be most devastating to the students who rely on it. The food insecurity gap over the weekend would reopen for some of these kids, and we'd see it reflected in their health, behavior, and academic performance. Our staff would feel helpless — we've seen the difference these meals make, and to have them taken away would feel like a step backward. Frankly, it would be heartbreaking.

In conclusion, Chairman Huffman and committee members, I would urge your support for the budget request of the Children's Hunger Alliance and respectfully request that you support Amendment SC0300 in the State Operating budget that would add \$1.25 million per fiscal year to restore CHA to flat funding (\$3.75 million per year). Restoration of these funds would prevent potential cuts to the weekend meal program.

I would now be pleased to answer any questions you may have.