



**Ohio Senate Health Committee  
Amended Substitute House Bill 96  
Ohio Food Bank Funding  
Matt Habash, President/CEO Mid-Ohio Food Collective  
May 13, 2025**

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson and Ranking Minority Member Liston and members of the Committee, I am Matt Habash, President and CEO of Mid-Ohio Food Collective. Today, I am submitting this written testimony as an interested party to House Bill 96, the state operating budget. I will highlight the support needed for funding for Ohio's food banks to address hunger and poverty.

Mid-Ohio Food Collective (MOFC) is the largest food relief agency in Ohio and one of the largest in the nation, serving 20 urban, rural and Appalachian counties from Chillicothe to Marion and Marysville to Belmont, including Columbus. To give you some context of our work to connect nutritious food to those who are struggling, last year Mid-Ohio Food Collective distributed 83.44 million pounds of food – enough for over 190,000 meals every day, serving more than 500,000 children, seniors, veterans, disabled and working adults facing nutritional insecurity. Please feel free to reach out to MOFC staff if you are interested in learning more about our operations; contact information for our advocacy team is included at the end of this testimony.

Along with our 12 fellow foodbanks and 3,600 agencies across the state of Ohio, we are respectfully requesting additional financial support through the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program (OFPACP) to continue to provide critical nutrition and supportive services for the Ohioans we serve. *Specifically, we and Ohio's foodbank network are requesting an increase in funding for OFPACP from the \$24.55 million per year appropriated in HB96 currently to \$29.48 million per year.* This reflects appropriation levels in prior state budgets with a small increase reflecting inflation and increased service visits.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, food prices rose by 23.6 percent between 2020-2024. This is in addition to health care, utility and other staples of daily life also outpacing overall inflation. The additional food costs impact those we serve, forcing neighbors to choose between rent, health care, food or other items. Inflation also affects our operations, making it more costly to acquire and deliver needed nutritional food, and for government agencies to obtain the food in the first place. The currently appropriated level was established in 2019 and our customers and our organization and its agency partners are facing realities of 2025 prices.

The Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program (OFPACP) also provides a secondary market for Ohio farmers, growers and producers to sell unmarketable and surplus products, paying farmers and producers to harvest, pack and send products to be distributed through the Ohio hunger relief network. This allows local farmers and producers - in particular smaller outfits - to avoid layoffs, keep their workers for longer, and support their local food system and community.

As shared in our Key Stats document, MOFC distributed over 50 million pounds of fresh food throughout our service in FY24, 63 percent of our total distribution. The OFPACP accounted for nearly 23 percent of total food distribution, the highest percentage of government support for MOFC. In short, the program is critical to our mission of providing fresh, healthy food for our customers.

| In providing fresh food, we are able to positively impact the well-being of our customers, helping children to better learn and adults to function better at work and elsewhere. We take a holistic approach to service because we know hunger does not work in isolation and that we must address the daily challenges that contribute to hunger and poverty.

We ask for support to increase state funding to \$29.48 million per year to the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program. This will help ensure continued capability to meet elevated need in our communities through the state food bank network. Please consider and support additional funding for the Ohio Food Program & Agriculture Clearance Program in House Bill 96.

We are happy to provide additional insight into our operations for any member who would like to learn more about MOFC and our services. Thank you for your time and consideration and please reach out with any questions. We appreciate your careful consideration of the Ohio food bank network's funding request to support a hunger-free, healthier Ohio.

Thank you,

Matt Habash  
President/CEO  
Mid-Ohio Food Collective  
mhabash@mofc.org  
(614) 274-7770

**Mid-Ohio Food Collective Advocacy Contacts**

Tim White: Director, Government Relations and Advocacy  
(C) (614) 314-2485  
Twhite@mofc.org

Hallie Carrino-Lee: Manager, Government Relations and Advocacy  
(C) (631) 338-5000  
Hcarrino-lee@mofc.org

Mike Hochron: Senior Vice President, Communications and Public Affairs  
(P) 614-317-9446  
Mhochron@mofc.org