



**Ohio Senate
Health Committee
Interested Party Written Testimony on HB 96**

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and other members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written interested party testimony on House Bill 96. I am the Interim President and CEO of the United Way of Summit and Medina Counties (UWSM). UWSM provides direct services to hundreds of thousands of people in eight counties: Carroll, Jefferson, Harrison, Lorain, Medina, Portage, Summit, and Tuscarawas. Our ecosystem of services connects people to the help they need while providing support until they achieve their goals. Our work puts people at the center of a system of support, giving them personalized help to meet their needs – from necessities like housing to ongoing support like financial counseling.

My testimony focuses on state programs that support Ohio families that are struggling to make ends meet, especially the ALICE population – households that are **Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed**. As you deliberate on the State Operating Budget, I respectfully request the inclusion of four programs, which will directly support the ALICE population by making life more affordable for working families across Ohio and growing workforce participation.

1. Restore the \$1,000 Child Tax Credit Provision in the As-Introduced Budget

Although wages have increased, so has the cost of living. Over 30% of Ohio families with children work in low-wage jobs that put them below the ALICE threshold. Support through a \$1,000 refundable child tax credit would truly help Ohio families. Three states with a refundable state-level child tax credit have a lower percentage of residents living below the ALICE threshold compared to Ohio. In addition, tax credits that raise after-tax wages make work more attractive and help keep people in the workforce.

2. Restore the Publicly-Funded Childcare Provision in the As-Introduced Budget

For ALICE families with young children, childcare is the highest cost in their household budget at \$1,600 per month for two children. In addition, without affordable and accessible



childcare, parents cannot fully participate in the workforce, must work reduced hours, or forego pay raises and advancements in their career. To make Ohio the best place to work and raise a family, ALICE families need expanded access to publicly-funded childcare with increased eligibility to 200% FPL.

3. Invest in Ohio 211 to Expand Access to Community Resources for Ohioans

Ohio 211 is a vital informational and referral resource assisting the ALICE population and connects them to services in their community. The top needs from callers in 2024 were food, followed by housing, and utility assistance, the same categories ALICE families struggle to afford. In 2024, Ohio 211 handled over 785,000 contacts from Ohioans across Ohio through a network of regional 211s. Yet Ohio 211 does not currently receive any state funding, which has led to 30 counties in Ohio not having 211 service and other counties are at-risk of losing the service due to reductions in charitable donations at the local level. Allocating \$2 million per fiscal year to Ohio 211 would connect all Ohioans and their families to life-saving services.

4. Restore Siemer Family Institute Funding Provision in the As-Introduced Budget

In partnership with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the Siemer Institute has funded six Family Stability programs with local United Ways to prevent homelessness. Our United Way is one of those programs. These funds are helping us support increased housing stability, income stability, and minimizing disruptive school moves. This program has demonstrated a return on investment to the state as it prevents families from needing other forms of more costly government assistance. Reinstating the \$2 million per fiscal year appropriation can help ALICE households maintain stable living conditions and thrive in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of these priorities to support Ohio families and do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions.

Annie McFadden
Interim President and CEO
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