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Agriculture & Natural Resources, Chair
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Senate Workforce Development Committee
Senate Bill 161 — Sponsor Testimony
Wednesday, May 28, 2025

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 161.

This bill will require the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to seek a waiver from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prohibit the use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for the purchase of “junk food” such as pop, chips, candy, and other prepared desserts such as cakes and cookies.

The goal of this legislation is to improve the nutritional quality of the foods available for purchase under the SNAP. These foods are often viewed with little to no nutritional value and defeat the intended purpose of SNAP, which is to get healthy and nutritious foods in the hands of those families in crisis.

Additionally, the bill asks USDA to define these items as they administer the SNAP program at the national level. This assures that Ohio is using the same definitions on these products as other states across the country.

Within the past week, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins signed waivers for Indiana and Iowa to prohibit the use of SNAP benefits to purchase pop and candy. A similar waiver was also recently signed for Nebraska for pop and energy drinks.

As of today, 17 other states have either passed legislation, submitted a waiver, or have legislation pending to prohibit using SNAP benefits to buy pop and candy.

To be clear, there is nothing in this proposal to prevent individuals on SNAP from using their own hard-earned dollars to buy these items, they just can't use their taxpayer funded SNAP benefits to purchase these items.

Thank you once again Chairman Huffman and members of the committee for the opportunity to present this legislation to you today. I will now turn it over to my joint sponsor, Vice Chair Terry Johnson for his sponsor testimony.