



[www.ohiofoodbanks.org](http://www.ohiofoodbanks.org)

101 E. Town St.  
Suite 540  
Columbus, OH 43215

Phone: 614-221-4336  
Fax: 614-221-4338

Home of  
The Ohio Benefit Bank™

[www.ohiobenefits.org](http://www.ohiobenefits.org)  
1-800-648-1176

TESTIMONY to HB 64  
April 16, 2015

Ohio Association of Foodbanks  
Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger

Ohio House Finance Committee

Lisa Hamler-Fugitt  
Executive Director

Ohio Association of Foodbanks  
101 East Town Street, Suite 540  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
614/221-4336 ext. 222  
614/271-4803 cell  
[lisa@ohiofoodbanks.org](mailto:lisa@ohiofoodbanks.org)

---

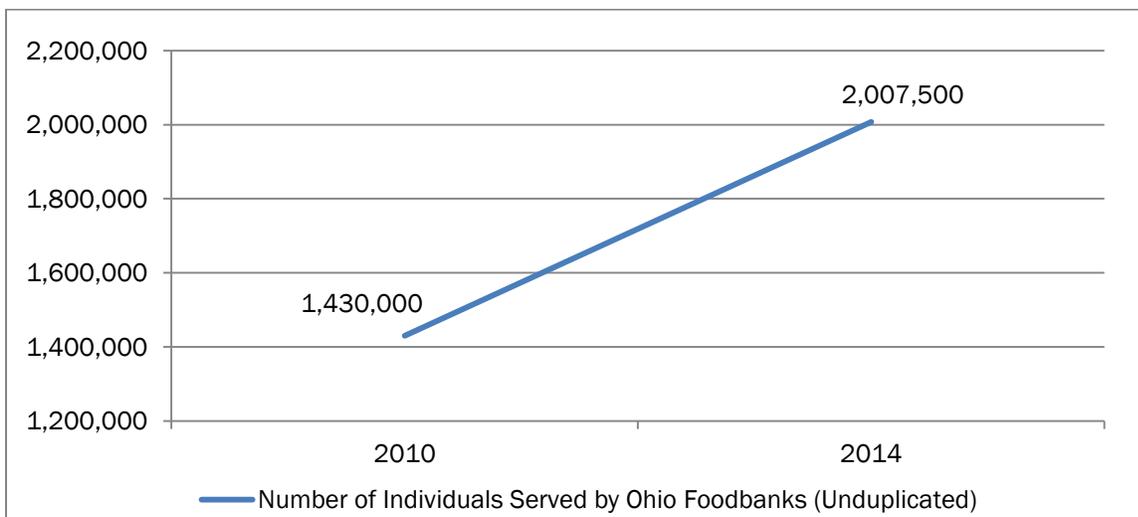
Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Lisa Hamler-Fugitt and I serve as the executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger. I want to start by thanking Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Driehaus and the members of this committee for your leadership and recognition of the need for increased food support for the record two million Ohioans we served last year.

I also want to thank the members of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee, Chairman Sprague, Vice Chairwoman Sears, ranking Minority Member Sykes and distinguished members Romanchuk and Antonio for their leadership, patience and steadfast resolve during the weeks and countless hours of testimony from witnesses that came before the committee on critical issues, that are truly life and death matters facing our most vulnerable citizens – thank you so much!

With the additional \$2.75 million in funding per year you have provided in Sub. HB 64, in support of the Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program, you provided the means to prevent costly diet-related diseases, to support children's educational achievement and their parent's worker productivity. You supported the efforts of my network of 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,300 member agencies to secure enough food to meet record demand amid declining federal resources. And you helped the Ohio farmers we partner with to extend some of their worker's hours to pick and pack the precious fruits and vegetables that they would otherwise have to plow under.

Thank you so very much for this investment in preventing hunger and in securing a better future for all Ohioans.

As I've related before, hunger in Ohio has risen 40 percent from 2010 to 2014. That startling figure comes from the recent Hunger in Ohio 2014 study, conducted every four years and part of the largest study of its kind in the nation.<sup>1</sup>



---

<sup>1</sup> Feeding America, Westat, Urban Institute. 2014. "Hunger in Ohio 2014: Full Technical Report" [http://admin.ohiofoodbanks.org/uploads/news/final\\_state\\_report.pdf](http://admin.ohiofoodbanks.org/uploads/news/final_state_report.pdf)

## Map the Meal Gap

This study's findings are reinforced by a recently released landmark study, *Map the Meal Gap*, showing the rates of hunger in every Ohio county for individuals and for children. If you are a Columbus Dispatch subscriber you picked up your paper yesterday and saw these words: "Jobs return, but hunger remains a problem in Ohio." While food insecurity rates grow higher in Ohio counties, the unemployment rate drops. This official unemployment rate is no longer an indicator of poverty, hunger or food insecurity. It's no longer an indicator of the health of our community, state or nation.



Volunteer Andrea Courtois, foreground, helps a client, obscured in the background, pick food up at the food pantry at the Mid-Ohio Foodbank in Grove City.

The current report found that Ohio's food insecurity rate was 16.9 percent, higher than the national rate of 15.8 percent and all Midwestern states except Missouri (at 17 percent). I know this is not how the Buckeyes want to beat the Wolverines, but sadly Ohio's rate is higher even than Michigan's.

## **The Ohioans we serve have lost over 258 million federally-funded meals in the past 15 months...and counting.**

I want to talk for just a moment about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps or food assistance. SNAP was designed 50 years ago as the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Of those households we serve that receive food assistance benefits, half reported exhausting their monthly benefits within two weeks or less, and 85 percent reported exhausting them by the third week of the month.

All SNAP recipients in Ohio and across the nation saw reductions in their benefits beginning November 1, 2013, when Congress prematurely ended a modest increase to SNAP benefits made as part of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Compounding this loss in federal benefits, the State of Ohio chose to pass up a statewide federal waiver offered by the United States Department of Agriculture beginning January 1, 2014. The waiver would have allowed unemployed, able-bodied, childless adults between 18 and 50 years of age to continue to receive modest SNAP benefits— 100 percent federally-funded benefits— while seeking employment. The result has been a drastic decrease in the food budgets of those we serve and a corresponding increase in need and visits to our network.

Make no mistake, we support work and know that the best way to keep someone out of our food lines is with a good job that pays enough to support a household at a basic level. Yet half of the households we serve have at least one member that has been employed in the

past year, although 46 percent of those households report that the longest-employed person in their household worked part-time. And it certainly can't all be blamed on lack of training or skills. Forty-one percent of households we serve have at least one adult member with education beyond high school, including those with a business, trade, or technical license or certificate, some college, and those with two or four-year college degrees. The full-time jobs that paid living wages and provided benefits have been replaced by part-time, low-wage jobs that just aren't cutting it for Ohio families.

## **SNAP and work requirements**

To get SNAP benefits, households must meet certain tests, including resource and income tests. The program also has work and work registration requirements for everyone 16 to 60 years of age.

### **SNAP Employment Requirements**

Adults without children who do not also have a diagnosed disability between 18 and 50 years old can get SNAP benefits for only 3 months in a 36-month period if they do not work or participate in a workfare or employment and training program other than job search. In 2014, this requirement was waived in 16 of Ohio's 88 counties and 17 counties in 2015.

With some exceptions adults between 16 and 60 must register for work, accept suitable employment, and take part in an employment and training program to which they are referred by the local office. Failure to comply with these requirements can result in disqualification from the program.<sup>i</sup>

Waivers to the work requirement are available when unemployment rates and labor surpluses climb, and, in spite of continued eligibility for the waiver given the state's economic climate, an estimated 134,000 vulnerable Ohioans are now subject to the work requirement.

Unless they can secure at least 20 hours a week of paid employment or access one of a very limited number of volunteer work experience opportunities, their access to SNAP/food stamps is limited to three months of every 36-month period.

Franklin County was one of the 72 Ohio counties that did not receive a waiver to exempt Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) receiving benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from participating in the federal work requirement to ensure they are able to maintain their food assistance benefits.

In order to make sure that work was being done to understand and support this population's efforts to find work and keep their food benefits the Ohio Association of Foodbanks began our Work Experience Program (WEP) in December of 2013 and expanded quickly to accommodate the increasing number of ABAWD referrals.

Hundreds of ABAWDs meet with an Ohio Association of Foodbanks WEP Assessment Specialist each month to complete a comprehensive assessment at their local FCDJFS Opportunity Center. Clients are then required to attend one three-part clinic to receive a FBI/BCI background check and are offered a variety of valuable job related opportunities. After clients complete the assessment and have attended the clinics, they are placed at a qualified partner organization to complete their monthly work requirement which allows them to maintain their SNAP benefit eligibility for the duration of their participation.

Our interest in the ABAWD population does not end when they exit our program. We are concerned about the well-being and long term outcomes of our clients. We conducted a post-WEP client study to examine the course of clients after they have exited the program. The findings of this report provide information about post-participation employment status and the most common causes of failure to comply with FCDJFS mandated WEP involvement. One of our many goals in hosting WEP is to assist ABAWDs with finding sustainable employment to become economically self-sufficient.

The findings of our comprehensive assessment of this population were presented to this committee last month and can be found at our website at the following link: <http://admin.ohiofoodbanks.org/uploads/news/WEP-2013-2014-report.pdf> I won't review them in person today, but they are alarming and point towards a need for a deeper understanding of the barriers to work for this population.

The Ohioans we serve want to work. They want to hold up their heads and have a steady job that provides for their families. It is one of the hardest things, to watch a father or mother swallow their pride and visit a food pantry to be able to get enough food to feed their family. Imposing work requirements without regard to barriers like training, literacy, transportation, mental or physical health, felonies or others will not support these individuals on a true pathway to work. It can be done, but only with significant resources and supports, and from a position of understanding their needs and their strengths.

Thank you for your attention and your unwavering support for our work and my network. The increased funding you have provided is sorely needed and will be maximized to its full extent. Thank you for recognizing the need for additional funding for food. You have given us, and the agencies who work alongside us, hope for a better future.

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

---

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility>