

Testimony Amended Sub. H. B. 49

Ohio Senate Finance Committee
June 7, 2017

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Good morning Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Skindell and distinguished members of the Senate Finance Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your previous support in the last budget for our state-funded food programs. 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. We represent Ohio's 12 foodbanks, providing critical programs to 3,300 member food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters and new in-demand site based distributions outlets. Over 80 percent of our



charities are faith-based, volunteer-driven, and operating on budgets of less than \$25,000 a year. Together 1 in 6 of our hungry and poor friends and neighbors were served by our programs last year.

Our association has been honored to partner with the State of Ohio for over two decades now – working collaboratively to develop innovative public private partnership programs and joint efforts that reduce hunger, food insecurity and poverty in our state.

Characterized as one of the most effective public-private partnerships operating today, the Ohio Food Program and the Agricultural Clearance Program (OFFACP) has been supported by four governors, 10 General Assemblies, and funded through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) budget.

These programs prevent waste, reduce loss for farmers and growers, increase and sustain employment in Ohio, representing the most nutritious food our foodbanks distribute, and, most importantly, provides over 25% of all the food we distribute and is the most wholesome food we purchase for pennies on the pound.

Despite these successful programs and outcomes, hunger continues to increase in Ohio – more people are needing more food more frequently. Over the last two years, we have experienced significant increases and demands for more food to support new site based food pantries located in schools and on college campuses, at health care clinics, VA clinics, MCO's, hospitals and low-income senior housing complexes. We have received over 500 new partner requests to supply them with on-site, produce distributions and mobile food pantry markets.

Hunger is a complex problem in Ohio, affecting 1 in 4 children, 1 in 8 seniors including more grandparents who report caring for their grandchildren and great grandchildren, and 1 in 3 working poor Ohioans. Compounding this complex problem has been the result of both state and federal changes to the SNAP/Food Stamp Program, which is the first line of defense against hunger. These changes began in late 2013 and were completely outside of our control and the people we serve. The Ohioans we serve who are poor enough to qualify for food stamps have lost over \$1.28 billion in 100% federally-funded food assistance representing the loss of over 875 million meals.

To help us meet the increasing demands, it will require a comprehensive solution and approach—including government funding, more private and corporate donations, community and faith-based partnerships, and access to federal nutrition programs and other programs for low-income individuals and families.

A Comprehensive Approach to hunger will allow Ohio to set the standard for addressing food insecurity by reducing administrative costs and overhead; integrating all programs in a manner that maximizes opportunities for efficiency and cost savings; increasing our ability to leverage food purchases and public-private partnerships across programs; and streamlining program operations and overall effectiveness.

Overview of Ohio Association of Foodbanks Food Programs

In state fiscal year 2016, funding was provided for a series of programs to enhance the availability of fresh fruits, vegetables, protein items and shelf staple items to Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks. The two largest programs are the Ohio Food Program, which focuses on protein and shelf staple items, and the Agricultural Clearance Program, which directs agricultural surplus items from Ohio farmers and growers to the foodbanks. In FY16, the state's investment of \$19.5 million in funding for the Agricultural Clearance Program, Ohio Food Program, and the \$2.3 million in funding of the Governor's Summer Meals Programs added **\$45.3 million in economic output** across Ohio, **generated \$14.2 million in income**, and **led to the creation of 487 jobs**, in addition to the direct benefits of providing over **52.7 million pounds of food**, providing **46.1 million meals to needy Ohioans**.

The Summer Weekend Meals program provides shelf-stable, kid-friendly weekend meals for children attending summer food sites. The Summer Rural Delivery Meals Program provides kids in underserved, rural counties where no federally funded summer meal programs are available with a week's worth of shelf-stable, kid-friendly meals. Finally, the Mobile Farmers Market Program provides fresh fruits and vegetables and popular protein items such as peanut butter to families in the Summer Weekend and Rural Delivery Meals programs.

We humbly requested the support of the Ohio House for a \$5 million per year amendment from unobligated TANF Block Grant funding, to partially support these proven cost effective and targeted food programs.

Unfortunately, our modest and humble request was not included in the Ohio House passed version of Amended Sub. HB 49 and much to our surprise and deep disappointment, the bill contained a new provision in Section 307.45 that reduces and redirects \$1,000,000 over the biennium from the Association's existing appropriation. This harmful provision, disregards the significant benefits of the economies of scale in our purchasing power and will negatively impact our network and the more than 2 million hungry Ohioans we serve. The redirection of \$1,000,000 proposed by this provision will result in the loss of over of 5.5 million pounds of produce, representing 138 semi-tractor trailer loads of Ohio grown and raised vegetables, fruits and protein. This cut represents a loss to Ohio farmers and those who work to grow, harvest and supply this wholesome food to hungry Ohioans.

In closing, I want to thank you for your previous support and consideration. The Association

humbly request that this committee accept an amendment to restore the \$1,000,000 the Ohio House of Representatives redirected, to Section 307.40 Ohio Association of Foodbanks.

In addition, ***we request your support and adoption of an amendment for \$5 million per year from existing federal funding – unobligated TANF—to support a Comprehensive Approach to Hunger relief***, that will direct the maximum amount of funding available to Ohioans who need it most, putting food on the tables of Ohio families, positioning our children to be healthy and ready to learn, protecting the welfare of our senior citizens and other vulnerable populations, and setting the hunger relief standard among states.

Feeding hungry Ohioans, many who are disabled, elderly, sick and suffering from chronic diseases, has the potential to save the State billions in short- and long-term health care expenditures, increasing human capital and our ability to meet the challenge of a global economy. Thank you for your support and consideration of these modest and humble request.

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

<http://ohiofoodbanks.org/docs/publications/10th-anniversary-retrospective-final-web.pdf>
http://ohiofoodbanks.org/docs/publications/losing_ground_updated_march_2017.pdf
http://ohiofoodbanks.org/docs/publications/SFY2016_annual_report.pdf
http://ohiofoodbanks.org/summermeals/summer_initiatives_2016.pdf
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