



Toledo Northwestern Ohio
FOOD BANK

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May 12, 2021

Good Morning Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is James M. Caldwell and I am the President/CEO of the Toledo Northwestern Ohio Foodbank.

Since 1984 we have been supporting the following counties in Northwest Ohio: Williams, Fulton, Lucas, Defiance, Henry, Wood, Ottawa, and Sandusky. We have over two hundred-member agencies that range from emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, rehabilitation centers, special programs for the elderly, group homes, holiday food basket programs and non-profit day care centers. To date we have provided over 100 million pounds of food to these agencies in the fight against hunger.

The pandemic last year tested the Food Bank and its member agencies in new ways. First, we saw a record number of individuals and families seeking assistance. In comparison to 2019, there was an 18% increase in the number of households (212,136), a 21% increase in individuals (581,641), and a 25% increase in pounds of food distributed (8,462,138).

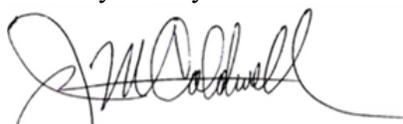
The growing need for food and the new safety and health protocols for COVID-19 forced a few of our member agencies to close their doors. In response to these obstacles, the Food Bank itself began Emergency Food Box Distributions in each county. This contactless method has proven to be successful but also costly as we now face increase in fuel costs and the need for drivers. To combat the rising costs of fuel, we heavily relied on our state partnerships with local farmers such as Weirs Farm, to provide healthy food to our community.

As we progress into a second year, many Northwest Ohioans are still feeling the impact of losing their jobs, having their business close, their wages decrease, and having themselves or loved ones suffer from illness. Many children still face uncertainty in where they receive their food as schools open for a few days of the week. Our seniors are still afraid to travel for groceries. The fight against hunger has not slowed down in our communities but has continued to present itself in new ways.

I'm submitting written testimony to ask for your consideration and support of Amendments SC2155 and SC2155X1 to H.B. 110, which would provide a one-time-only, temporary 2-year funding increase of \$20 million per year in Section 307.40 to help provide: emergency food assistance relief through the Ohio Association of Foodbanks Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program; other essential household non-food items that can't be purchased with SNAP benefits; and a \$1 million investment per year to support capacity building for local hunger relief organizations to ensure hard-hit communities don't lose local access to charitable relief.

With this increased support, you are providing the Food Bank a sense of relief and confidence as we continue in this evolving fight against hunger.

Thank you for your consideration of this request,



James Caldwell
President & CEO

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