



Written Testimony to Ohio Senate Finance Committee

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Ohio Association of Foodbanks
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Amended Sub. H.B. 110

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Minority Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. I'm 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 12 Feeding America foodbanks, and nearly 3,600 member charities, who distributed over 270 million pounds of food to more than 2.5 million Ohioans last year. [Our most recent annual report](#) provides a complete and thorough accounting of the State of Ohio's support for our critical food programs and our outcomes over the last year, which broke historical records for demand for help and in terms of the response we worked diligently to expand, adapt, and maintain.

Currently HB 110 provides flat funding of \$24.5 million each year in support of the Ohio Food and Agricultural Clearance Programs and a one-time investment of \$12 million in CARES Act funding in calendar year 2021 only.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testify on the changes contained in the pending budget.

Section JFSCD57: Ohio Association of Foodbanks subgrant agreement

We would like to thank Senator Hottinger for including this amendment which restores the original reporting language that was removed in HB 119, the state budget bill enacted by the 127th General Assembly. The Office of Budget and Management removed the language, citing it was unnecessary as the reporting requirements are contained and specified within the association's biannual grant agreement with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

All of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks previous and current grant agreements contain all compliance and reporting requirements as detailed in ARTICLE I. PURPOSE; SUBGRANT ACTIVITIES Section A.

Every year since inception of our public-private partnership in 1998, we have submitted quarterly and annual reports detailing the scope, stewardship, transparency, and impact of this support. Each report provides detailed reporting of all program deliverables and expenditures per the grant agreement requirement, including: foods purchased; the farmers, producers, processors, wholesalers and/or manufacturers from which the foods were purchased; cost paid for the food; cost to transport and store the food; and a complete reporting by county of pounds of food distributed and the number of Ohioans that received the food by household type and age breakdown.



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In addition to this reporting on the Ohio Agricultural Clearance and Ohio Food Programs, we provide a complete report on the additional capacity building outcomes, investments and purchases, such as refrigerators, freezers, shelving units, hand carts and equipment purchased to assist our non-profit and faith-based agencies to build and increase their capacity to serve needy families.

We also report on the annual impact and outcomes of the Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives summer meals programs and other performance outcomes, including what we were able to leverage through our sources, including through federal commodity programs and retail, manufacturer, food drive, and local donation programs.

Foodbanks are required per Ohio Revised Code to serve Ohioans with incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, the level of income most economists consider as the minimum level of income needed to achieve a self-sufficient standard of living. Half of food insecure Ohioans earn slightly too much to receive SNAP benefits – meaning we are their only food lifeline. Statewide, pre-pandemic data found that 31.2% of Ohio residents, or 3,538,045 people, lived at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, which means they are eligible to receive help from our foodbanks.

As we prepare for the future we are facing a number of new challenges including:

1. The expiration and removal of the state’s COVID-19 emergency declaration, which will result in the premature loss of \$128 million per month in additional 100% federally-funded food assistance benefits for more than 1.5 million Ohioans. These SNAP emergency allotments require both the federal and state emergency declarations to be in place but are not related to any health orders or mitigation efforts. For comparison, Ohio's foodbanks sourced food valued at \$345 million for ALL of last year. More information about the risk to prematurely ending these emergency allotments is available from [this recent brief by The Center for Community Solutions](#). The legislature can act to maintain a basic declaration that would secure these vital federally-funded food benefits for the remainder of 2021; the USDA does not require any health orders or mitigation efforts to be included. When the temporary emergency SNAP enhancements do end, it will create a significant benefit cliff. The extra SNAP benefits are currently slated to disappear abruptly rather than phasing out and our network will need your help to be prepared to make up for that loss. But we urge you not to allow those benefits to end prematurely due to what is merely an administrative matter.
2. On July 2, the remaining Ohio National Guard soldiers and airmen that have been serving at Ohio foodbanks since March 2020 will be decommissioned. These citizen soldiers have provided critical emergency response capabilities to foodbanks and other COVID-19 missions since March 2020. We recognize this critical phase is ending, and our foodbanks are struggling to recruit volunteers that left in mass due to the pandemic. We will be forever grateful to Governor DeWine and Major General Harris and the hundreds of dedicated members of Ohio National Guard for their service and support during this critical time.





- 3. Foodbanks are also absorbing a sharp decline in federal food commodities, and, unlike other sectors, foodbanks have received no direct federal relief or support from the American Rescue Plan Act.

In closing, your actions to protect SNAP Emergency Allotments in the short-term will prevent immediate suffering, and additional funding and investments in our network will ensure that we have the commodities and capacity available to respond when the significant loss of SNAP Emergency Allotments does hit Ohio seniors and working families in 2022.

Our association looks forward to working with members of this committee as you develop the spending priorities for the American Rescue Plan. Foodbanks are often the trusted clearinghouse for access to many types of emergencies, recovery, and services. We request your consideration for strategic one-time investment of American Rescue Plan Act funds in our shared efforts to stabilize and sustain Ohio's agriculture sector as well as Ohio's families and seniors through the Ohio Agricultural Clearance and Ohio Food Programs, and for our broader efforts to connect Ohioans with programs from SNAP and WIC to Medicaid, employment and training programs, nutrition counseling, and more. You can help ensure that every Ohioan can be part of an equitable recovery that meets basic needs and invests in the health and well-being of each person, while strengthening and supporting Ohio's number one industry.

I would be pleased to answer any questions, that you may have and can be reached at 614/271-4803 cell; 614/221-4336 ext.222 office; Lisa@ohiofoodbanks.org

Respectfully submitted

