



Written Testimony to the Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee

Bill Faith, Executive Director

February 23, 2021

Senate Bill 17

I appreciate the opportunity to express COHHIO's opposition to Senate Bill 17, which would make it harder for struggling families, working adults and seniors to apply for and stay enrolled in critical assistance programs that are often essential for their survival.

Too many Ohioans are already struggling. Even prior to the pandemic, nearly 400,000 Ohio households were spending over half their income on rent. Of the 10 most common jobs in Ohio, only three actually paid enough to afford a two-bedroom apartment. Over 76,000 Ohioans experienced homelessness in one year, nearly one-third of whom are children.

In the months since Covid-19 infected our state and its economy, the situation has grown far worse for our most precarious families. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 331,000 Ohio households were behind on rent in December, and 262,000 were concerned about getting evicted. Unsheltered homelessness is increasing in some communities. The City of Springfield, for example, has seen its homeless population explode – demand for shelter increased nearly seven times what it was at the beginning of the pandemic.

SNAP and Medicaid are critical lifelines for hundreds of over 1 million low-income Ohioans who are extremely vulnerable to eviction and homelessness. Important documents frequently get lost during these chaotic and traumatic experiences. Senate Bill 17 would require struggling Ohioans to produce documents that they often don't have in order to get food and healthcare.

Reducing access to SNAP and Medicaid will harm the health of low-income Ohioans and push even more into homelessness. Ohio simply cannot afford the damage that would be caused by Senate Bill 17. We urge you to reject this legislation to protect the health and future of Ohio's families.