



February 22, 2021

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee,

My name is Julie Chase-Morefield and I have had the honor of serving as President and CEO of the Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio since 2004. Second Harvest serves individuals and families in Crawford, Erie, Huron, and Lorain Counties with a mission to grow hope in our region by creating pathways to nutritious food.

It is impossible for me to overstate the overwhelming nature of the past year - being on the front lines of responding of the crisis with our dedicated team and our incredible National Guard soldiers and airmen - working hard every day to exercise creativity, move nimbly, and robustly respond to the need for our help. Far too many families were forced to reach out for help for the very first time, with the need for food skyrocketed in our four-county territory to over 154,000 unduplicated people - nearly one-third of the residents of our region. Given the challenges faced by so many, it's inconceivable to imagine how much worse it might have been if the policies in Senate Bill 17 were already enacted.

When I see legislation like Senate Bill 17 under consideration by the state legislature, I would challenge our elected officials to witness firsthand the stories of their fellow Ohioans struggling to put food on their table. To hear the story of a father, who lost one of his two jobs, sitting in his car at Ely Stadium in Elyria with his young child to receive food at a drive-thru mobile pantry so he can feed his family. Or personally dropped off food to a mother recovering from COVID, stepping around two tiny bicycles to reach to her doorstep, to ensure she had enough food for her young daughters while she recovered. To spend time packing food boxes into the trunks of cars driven by families desperate to keep their homes, keep their jobs or find a new one and keep hunger at bay for their kids another day.

The Second Harvest team has spent the past year doing everything within our power to ensure our emergency food distributions are accessible, seamless, and safe. Launching an online pre-registration tool to allowed families in need to sign up for upcoming food distributions, hosting hundreds of drive-thru mobile pantries in all types of weather and locations and keeping our inventory moving on our trucks to families as quickly as possible. We continue to work closely with local school districts, municipalities and community partners to deliver food across our entire region, especially for families with children and the immigrant families in our area that have often been left out of federal COVID-19 relief.

With this monumental effort, it's disheartening to see legislation like this introduced and be seriously considered when we see how devastating the situation remains for the families we serve, and knowing this legislation would make it that much harder for many of them to access or

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maintain the critical lifeline of SNAP. I could not imagine a mother, humbled by this tragedy, being told she must sell her minivan before enrolling in SNAP or a senior being told an emergency savings account he worked hard to build in case of illness or emergency must be spent down before he could receive SNAP. Or workers employed in our local tourism industry, decimated by the pandemic, being told they must report back to Job and Family Services every time their paycheck was different than the week before in order to hold onto a couple hundred dollars in food benefits.

Senate Bill 17 is misguided. The Ohio families we serve, and those served by our sister foodbanks across the state, need more help not less. They need to be treated with dignity and respect, not stigma and disdain. I look forward to opportunities to work with you on legislation to strengthen our safety net programs as we work help families return to stability, and hope you recognize Senate Bill 17 does not serve that purpose.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juliana Chase-Morefield', written in a cursive style.

Juliana Chase-Morefield
President & CEO