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United Way SUMMIT • MEDINA

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President & CEO

SB 17 – Opponent testimony

February 24, 2021

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 17 (SB 17). My name is Jim Mullen and I am the President and CEO of United Way of Summit & Medina.

United Way of Summit & Medina is committed to creating a community where all individuals and families are welcomed, treated fairly, and given the appropriate resources they need to help them and their families, especially in times of hardship. Crisis, hunger and homelessness can happen at any time, to virtually anyone. We are investing more toward the basic needs of our community than ever before, to assist with nutrition, shelter and access to healthcare. At United Way of Summit & Medina we give a voice to those who rely on short-term government assistance, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), to feed their families whether that be during a pandemic, or otherwise.

That is why we are **strongly opposed to SB 17**. This legislation will have a direct negative impact on the vulnerable communities we serve. Consider, for example, Summit County residents Erica and Henry, the parents of two children – a newborn and a two-year-old. Erica had a difficult pregnancy, resulting in an emergency C-section, and was not able to go back to work due to a challenging recovery and multiple hospitalizations. Consequently, Henry was the only source of income for their family. Two weeks after the birth of their baby, Henry was diagnosed with COVID-19 and therefore unable to go to his temporary job. Because Henry had no sick time, he did not get paid. With no income, they depended on SNAP to meet the food needs of their family. Henry and Erica were able to get through the month as a result of SNAP benefits as well as food assistance available at their local church. They also needed assistance to pay their rent and utilities. Without SNAP, they simply would not have been able to feed their newborn and toddler. Additional restrictions to obtain SNAP benefits, would have made a hard time even more difficult.

While there may be some who have taken advantage of these benefits, most of the SNAP used by Ohioans saves the lives of children and families across the state, and the story of Erica and Henry is all too common throughout Ohio. We should not make it more difficult for Ohioans to obtain these important, lifesaving, short-term measures – and especially not in the middle of a global pandemic.

Thank you for your time and attention to this incredibly important matter. We urge you to oppose the bill and work towards policies that support the safety and security of Ohioans, especially in time of a global health crisis.

WE ARE YOUR UNITED WAY