



May 19, 2023

Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Eva Bloom, Director of Development
May 25, 2023
Amended House Bill 33

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino and Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the state of hunger in Ohio. My name is Eva Bloom and I represent the SE Ohio Foodbank, a program of Hocking Athens Perry Community Action. We serve 10 rural counties in Southeast Ohio including Athens, Gallia, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Morgan, Perry, Vinton, and Washington.

Since last summer we've faced food shortages that have brought our inventory to the lowest level in five years. As a smaller, rural foodbank, we rely heavily on publicly funded food. The Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program (OFP/ACP) accounted for 24% of the food we distributed in 2022. Over the last year, we have experienced disruptions in delivery of The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAB) product; that has made what we receive from the OFP/ACP even more vital. Without these resources we would not be able to meet the needs of the 70 member food pantries or meal providers.

At the same time we have faced food shortages, we have seen higher demand for food assistance than at any time during the pandemic. In 2022, we provide 1.1 million more meals than in 2021. Many workers in our region hold lower paying jobs in retail, home health, or food service. Their wages have not kept up with rising costs resulting from the highest level of inflation since 2008. Faced with insufficient income to meet basic needs, those we serve are making impossible choices between buying food or medicine. They are also resorting to less healthy, but more affordable options at the grocery store. In the words of one of our neighbors in line at a food distribution, "money just don't go far enough for things with spending costs of today."

With the end of SNAP Emergency Allotments in March demand has risen even higher. Our network saw an 18% increase in April compared to February. "I'm here because I get \$23 a month for food," one neighbor told me while she sat in her car waiting for food assistance.





As a result of these circumstance, I humbly request your consideration of the following amendments to HB 33.

Support of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks amendment SC0437 that will provide an additional \$10.45 million per year to support the purchase of 100 million pounds of food through the Ohio Food and Agricultural Clearance programs from Ohio farmers, growers and commodity producers and to provide this food to food insecure and hungry Ohioans.

Our successful, decades-long public-private partnership with the State of Ohio supports:

Our workforce: providing a safety net for workers; preventing job loss and greater economic hardship by responding to household income shortfalls during personal or community crises, from a car repair bill to a tornado.

Our families and older adults: helping kids learn and grow; supporting parents so they can focus on keeping up with other household expenses from housing to health care; and rethinking how we support older adults as they strive to age in place with dignity and in better health.

Our agriculture and food producers: supporting agricultural and food supply chains; providing a safety net for producers facing climate and market instability; reducing food waste.

These highly effective hunger lifelines provide 1 out of every 4 meals we distribute. Each meal we distribute provides the vital nutrition the seniors, hard-working individuals, and children need to live healthy lives and contribute to a stronger community.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Eva Bloom".

Eva Bloom
Director of Development

