



**Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Substitute House Bill 33
Ohio Food Bank Funding and Public Assistance Programs
Matt Habash, President/CEO Mid-Ohio Food Collective
June 9, 2023**

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Minority Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am Matt Habash, President and CEO of Mid-Ohio Food Collective (MOFC). I am sharing this written testimony as an interested party to Substitute House Bill 33, the state operating budget, as a follow up to previous testimony and the subsequent release of the Senate version of the state budget bill.

In alignment with Ohio's anti-hunger network, we request the following:

1. Restoration of funding for the Ohio Food and Agricultural Clearance programs to \$39 million as included in the budget bill as passed by the Ohio House. The substitute version as adopted by the Ohio Senate Finance Committee returned this line-item to flat funding of \$24.55 million. We support the Ohio Association of Food Banks' continuing request for an increase to \$50 million per year to meet the current rise in need. The House appropriation level represents a minimal investment to serve Ohio's citizens experiencing unprecedented hunger and economic turmoil; to best respond to current demand, please consider the \$50 million funding request amendment,
2. Removal of language added in the Senate Finance Committee regarding SNAP and Medicaid benefits. The expansion of work requirements, means testing, limiting account balances and waiver prohibitions will simply increase hunger while failing to promote employment and self-sufficiency.
3. Restoration of House passed language to offset reduced price school meals, helping ensure Ohio's children have access to nutritious food and can properly learn.

Mid-Ohio Food Collective is the largest hunger relief agency in central and eastern Ohio and one of the largest in the nation. We serve 20 urban, rural and Appalachian counties from Chillicothe to Marion and Marysville to Belmont, including Columbus. Last year Mid-Ohio Food Collective distributed 76 million pounds of food—enough for more than 170,000 meals every day. We provided more than 620,000 children, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and others facing food insecurity with nutritious sustenance in calendar year 2022.

For context of what we are seeing – as of the end of May 2023, service visits were up 41 percent from the same period last year. Likewise, our food acquisition costs have increased from between 15-30 percent in 2023 depending on the item. We are facing a tsunami of increased costs and need. We are grateful for the support from our individual and organizational donors, but we also need unequivocal support from our public partners as well. This is not the time to turn our backs on our neighbors and communities; rather, it is time to invest in our children, working families, seniors and others experiencing hardships.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for your time and consideration. We at Mid-Ohio Food Collective are happy to answer questions or share additional information. I will also ask each of you to visit your local food bank to see firsthand their operations and the dignified service we provide our neighbors. On behalf of Mid-Ohio Food Collective, we urge you to support our requests for Sub. House Bill 33. More specifically, we ask for your support on behalf of our neighbor - seniors, children, people with disabilities, veterans - those who have seen their work and personal circumstances change so dramatically in recent times. Together, we can bridge the gap and help families connect to the most basic of needs: food.

Thank you,

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