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Ohio Association of Foodbanks Statement on Senate Budget

Media Statement from Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director, Ohio Association of Foodbanks

“The budget passed today by the Ohio Senate represents a cut in funding for emergency food programs over the next two years, and a drastic, permanent decline in revenue to support basic health and human services most Ohioans rely on.

“The Ohio Association of Foodbanks and our network of 12 regional foodbanks and 3,600 local faith-based and community organizations have served on the front lines of a complex economic and public health crisis for more than three years – a crisis that is [escalating](#) in the wake of the end of pandemic-era relief and after more than a year of record inflation. Thanks to generous communities and donors, we have collectively secured hundreds of millions of dollars each year in donated foods, philanthropic and corporate giving, and valuable hours of volunteer service to support our mission to keep Ohioans from going hungry.

“We requested state funding of \$50 million per year in the upcoming 2024-25 state budget to purchase and distribute Ohio-grown fruits and vegetables, protein and dairy items, and shelf-stable products, a modest amount to help us keep millions of people in our state from suffering the indignity and harmful consequences of hunger. Instead, the Ohio Senate reduced funding from Am. H.B. 33 from \$39.55 million per year to \$24.55 million per year. The Senate also eliminated funds that would have made more free school meals available to students from families with low wages and slashed the Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives funding, which has supported the Governor’s Summer Meals Programs for Kids for more than a decade.

“While we are relieved that several egregious provisions that would have threatened access to federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for hundreds of thousands of low-income Ohioans were removed in the omnibus, we were upset to learn that a new provision that would require photos on SNAP cards, which has previously been estimated by LSC to cost at least \$15 million in first-year implementation, was added in the omnibus. The bill also added prohibitions on efforts that could streamline access to programs like SNAP, Medicaid and Unemployment Compensation for tens of thousands of Ohio families.

“The priorities of the Senate are clear and in stark contrast to the Ohio House’s vision and Governor DeWine’s legacy as a champion for food security and families. The Senate has proposed weakening revenue to such an extent that basic services carried out by state and local agencies, schools and community providers will deteriorate – all to cut taxes for wealthy individuals and corporations.

“We urge Governor DeWine, Lt. Governor Husted, and members of the Ohio House to firmly reject this budget and return to the fair, balanced and people-focused approach Ohioans want from their elected leaders.”

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About the Ohio Association of Foodbanks

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is Ohio’s largest charitable response to hunger, representing Ohio’s 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,600 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2022, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute more than 242 million pounds of food and grocery items. Follow the association on [Twitter](#), stay connected on [Facebook](#) and visit them on the web at www.ohiofoodbanks.org.

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