

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF FOODBANKS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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After weeks of delay, continued uncertainty and unwarranted budget cuts, Ohio Association of Foodbanks to exit federal ACA Navigator program

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

“It is with sincere regret and profound disappointment that we announce today our decision to exit the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) Navigator program. For four years, we have proudly led a statewide consortium of nonprofit organizations dedicated to helping Ohioans learn about, shop for and enroll in affordable health care options through both the federal Marketplace and expanded Medicaid. During that time, in spite of enormous obstacles and widespread misinformation and fear-mongering about the ACA, our Navigator consortium nearly met, met, or exceeded all of the ambitious goals we set out for ourselves.

“Over the past three weeks, the nonprofit organizations that make up our Navigator consortium and their hardworking staff have been held hostage by what we believe is a political maneuver to damage the viability and stability of the Affordable Care Act. Although we have consistently received positive feedback from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and have nearly met, met, or exceeded all of our goals, we received word last week that we would be eligible for just 29 percent of our funding.

“Wednesday, on a call hosted by CMS for Navigator grantees, we were informed that almost all of our funding is completely restricted, and that CMS will have up to 30 days to review and approve our revised proposal. If CMS does not approve that proposal in full, our consortium of nonprofit organizations would have no guarantee that any expenses we incur from now until then will be covered, and no ability to provide Navigator services during the limited period of Open Enrollment. Our consortium has already absorbed three weeks of operating costs with no ability to recoup our expenses, and for local, community-based nonprofit organizations, the possibility of continued delay is untenable.

“What’s more, we still have received no explanation for what methodology was used to determine our funding, who determined the methodology or how it was applied. CMS staff in the Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight division informed us they were not involved in those decisions and did not respond to our repeated questions about whether we would have recourse to challenge the methodology and how it was applied to our organization.

“Without adequate funding or a viable path forward, we have been forced to make an impossible choice. Due to this decision by CMS, Ohio consumers who need unbiased, in-person help with learning about, shopping for and enrolling in health care coverage will lose access to trusted Navigator resources in their communities. It will also result in direct job losses for hardworking Navigator personnel that have achieved incredible results during their tenures. It is with incredible disappointment that we regrettably announce our decision to exit the Navigator program.

“Help will still be available by contacting the Marketplace at 1-800-318-2596 or by visiting HealthCare.gov. The ACA remains the law of the land, and Open Enrollment in 2018 Marketplace plans will take place from November 1 through December 15, 2017.”

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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 3,300 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2016, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute over 208 million pounds of food and grocery items. The

association has also served as the home of The Ohio Benefit Bank since 2006. Follow the association on [Twitter](#), stay connected on [Facebook](#) and visit them on the web at www.ohiofoodbanks.org.

Contact: Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director for the Ohio Association of Foodbanks at 614-221-4336 ext. 222 or 614-271-4803 (cell) or lisa@ohiofoodbanks.org

Ohio Association of Foodbanks Navigator consortium organizations impacted include:

Access Health Mahoning Valley
Asian Services in Action, Inc.
Community Action Committee of Pike County
Cuyahoga Health Access Partnership
Freestore Foodbank
Ohio Association of Free Clinics
Southeast, Inc.
Toledo Lucas County CareNet
Washington-Morgan Community Action