



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**OHIO FOOD INSECURITY RATES NEARLY DOUBLE SINCE START OF COVID-19**  
*Nearly 350,000 Ohio households have reported receiving free food from  
a food pantry, school program, or other source in the past week*

**COLUMBUS, OH** – U.S. food insecurity and unemployment rates are at an all-time high due to the unforeseen effects of COVID-19, which have wreaked havoc all over the world since the beginning of 2020. In Ohio, more than one in seven workers remain unemployed, and [recent polls show](#) one in four Americans missed last month's rent or mortgage or have little to no confidence they can pay next month on time. Food insecurity rates have nearly doubled in Ohio from 13.9% to 23%, according to the [Census Household Pulse Survey](#). The Census found that *just in the past week*, nearly 350,000 Ohio households have reported receiving free food from a food pantry, school or children's program, or other source, such as a neighbor.

"COVID-19 has created the perfect storm, releasing a downpour of difficulties on Ohio families," said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. "High unemployment rates and loss of income from jobs has led to a massive surge in demand at our foodbanks at a time when we're facing significant operational challenges, including declines in volunteers, fundraising revenue and donated foods."

Foodbanks across the country rapidly shifted operating models to meet skyrocketing demand while mitigating the spread of COVID-19, and they haven't seen demand ease off for three months. Meanwhile, disruptions to the supply chain have meant fewer retail donations and a surge in food prices putting additional pressure on family food budgets.

"Congress attempted to put an umbrella over families' heads by means of expanding SNAP aid and increasing unemployment benefits, but it hasn't been enough," said Hamler-Fugitt. "The increase in food prices makes the current SNAP benefit amounts even more inadequate to meet basic food needs. Our foodbanks simply cannot keep up with this level of demand – congressional action is needed now."

SNAP is America's most effective anti-hunger program and one of the best ways to stimulate the economy as people spend their benefits quickly and in their local communities. As Congress negotiates the next stimulus package, Ohio's foodbanks urge members to consider the following:

- A temporary 15% increase in the maximum SNAP benefit for all households must be included. This modest change would add just \$25 per person per month, but this small increase will do a lot to address hunger and food insecurity.
- Congress must also consider the more than 30 million children across America who participate in school and summer meal programs and strengthen and extend the Pandemic-EBT program for them.

"The need for increasing SNAP benefits and ensuring the health and nutrition of Ohio and American families is urgent and it cannot wait," said Hamler-Fugitt. "The government must step in and do its job, particularly when the suffering is so great. Americans are drowning."

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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 2019, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute 230 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](http://www.ohiofoodbanks.org).*

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