



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**Extension of National Guard Response Critical to Nutrition Safety Net  
*Media Statement from Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director  
of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks***

“From the very early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Mike DeWine, Ohio Adjutant General Major General John C. Harris, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Director Kimberly Hall and other key leaders in the DeWine Administration have demonstrated clear and full support for the Ohio National Guard mission at Ohio’s foodbanks. Last week’s announcement to extend that mission, though in a reduced capacity, comes as welcome and needed relief for our network.

“As public health risks and volatility in local economies and food systems remain widespread, so too does the food security crisis in our state and across the nation. But it’s abundantly clear that the large-scale return of community volunteers to support our emergency hunger relief response remains unlikely while pandemic conditions persist. The remarkable Ohio National Guard soldiers and airmen serving at our warehouses and in our communities remain indispensable to keeping our fellow Ohioans fed.

“We’re grateful to Senators Portman and Brown and Representatives Balderson, Beatty, Chabot, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan, Stivers, and Turner for their efforts to urge the Trump Administration to extend federal funding for this and other COVID-19 missions. Along with the rest of the country, we hope that our collective efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus will mean fewer lost lives, less economic hardship, reduced hunger and a safer environment for volunteers to return to our foodbanks. Until then, we remain deeply thankful for the support and partnership of the Ohio National Guard and for Governor DeWine’s leadership in extending their deployment.

“For each supporter who wants to take action but doesn’t feel that in-person volunteering is right for them at this time, the most important action you can take is to urge your congressional members to support boosting the maximum household SNAP benefit and reauthorizing Pandemic EBT. These steps will put more purchasing power in the pockets of struggling families and ensure kids are less likely to suffer from hunger as the pandemic progresses. We ask that if you can’t lend your hand in our warehouses, that you lend your voice in solidarity with food insecure Ohioans.”

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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 nearly 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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