



Greater Cleveland  
Food Bank



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 15, 2022

**Ohio Association of Foodbanks Joint Statement on  
USDA Response to Food Shortfalls, Opportunity for Ohio to Match  
Media Statement from Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of  
Foodbanks, and the Ohio Association of Foodbanks Board of Directors**

“Ohio’s foodbank network is extremely grateful to the Biden-Harris administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for [their announcement](#) that they will provide nearly \$1.5 billion in additional funding for emergency food assistance nationally, roughly \$50 million of which will be used to direct food to Ohioans in need beginning in 2023.

“Our network has been providing a record response since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, including providing take-home groceries nearly 10 million times to hungry Ohioans just last year. While we have been forced to cut back on how much we can provide to each household seeking our help in recent months, those cutbacks would have been far deeper without USDA food purchases, which represented nearly a quarter (23%) of the food we distributed last year. USDA foods are particularly a lifeline for rural and under resourced communities, where significant donors are less prevalent and poverty and food insecurity rates are higher.

“For many months, our foodbanks have been strained nearly to a breaking point. Some are operating in deficit budgets, purchasing food just to keep enough balanced products on the shelves for our hunger relief partner organizations and the people we serve together. We have been buying more privately purchased food than ever before, at record prices. Just like Ohio families, foodbanks have been paying higher rates to keep our coolers on, our day-to-day operations afloat, and our trucks moving.

“Individual donors, corporations, and private funders have been generous and stepped up as best they are able to support our critical hunger relief response. Some of our counties, cities and townships have invested a portion of their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fiscal recovery funds, as well. Other federally funded pandemic-related relief measures have temporarily lessened more widespread hardship. Now, USDA has come forward with a federal government response to compounding food shortfalls that will lead to additional food arriving in Ohio foodbank warehouses beginning in early 2023.

“We want to be ready to distribute this food to Ohio families and balance the limited menu of USDA commodities with Ohio-grown, raised, and produced foods, and that’s where the State of Ohio can join with us. By matching this \$50 million investment by USDA with \$50 million in the State of Ohio’s ARPA funds, Governor DeWine and members of the Ohio General Assembly can ensure that the Ohioans hardest hit by the pandemic and ongoing economic uncertainty can count on us for the help they need in the future. Immediate ARPA funds will prevent a bleak holiday season, as well as help our network reinforce its storage and distribution capacity for the months ahead and support Ohio agriculture. We look forward to working with our state and federal partners to continue to keep our communities’ needs met.”

###

**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 3,700 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2022, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute nearly 243 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).*

**Contact:** Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, Executive Director for the Ohio Association of Foodbanks  
614-271-4803 (cell) – or – [lisa@ohiofoodbanks.org](mailto:lisa@ohiofoodbanks.org)

Joree Novotny, Director of External Affairs for the Ohio Association of Foodbanks  
614-273-5818 (cell) – or – [jnovotny@ohiofoodbanks.org](mailto:jnovotny@ohiofoodbanks.org)