



PRESS STATEMENT

RE: RELEASE OF U.S. CENSUS BUREAU'S *AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY*

September 22, 2011

“The data released today in the *American Community Survey* is another reminder of why emergency food assistance programs are vital to supporting hungry Ohioans. We each know someone who has been affected by the lingering recession and we must work together for the advancement of Ohio and its citizens, especially those who are most vulnerable. It is both wrong and unaffordable to leave such a large number of vulnerable Ohio families threatened by hunger and deepening poverty. This data should be a wake-up call for urgent investments in helping parents get back to work and to meet the basic needs of our hungry friends and neighbors.” Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks.

In light of the release of the *American Community Survey*, the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks urges Senator Sherrod Brown and Senator Rob Portman to work with federal officials to increase funding and resources for emergency food assistance programs in Ohio and throughout the nation. The following are the legislative priorities of the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks:

As Ohio's Economy Struggles to Recover, Hunger Remains High

The number of families struggling to make ends meet has increased significantly during the recession. With Ohio's unemployment now above 9 percent, the need for emergency food assistance continues to grow and foodbanks are being pressed to meet the need in their communities.

- ✓ **Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks and their network of more than 3,300 local agencies, 80% of which are faith-based, fed 1.97 million Ohioans, 35% of which were children and 14% of which were seniors in SFY 2011, a 58.9% increase in the number of clients served from 2006 to 2011.**
- ✓ Proposed cuts to nutrition assistance and other safety net programs would make it harder for families to recover from the recession and add demand to already over-strapped foodbanks.
- ✓ **Ohio's foodbanks could not meet current levels of need without support from federal nutrition programs** like The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), nor could they meet added demand if the current funding levels and structure of SNAP and other federal nutrition programs were eroded.

As Congress addresses our nation's long-term fiscal challenges, Ohio's foodbanks urge legislators to safeguard nutrition assistance and other safety net programs:

DEFICIT REDUCTION:

While it is important to balance the budget, we should be cutting programs and policies that do not work, not those for which there is both significant demonstrated need and proven effectiveness, like nutrition assistance programs. In addition to specific funding cuts and programmatic changes, we are concerned about the impact of budget mechanisms intended to ensure fiscal responsibility. **Measures such as an across-the-board discretionary freeze, global spending cap, or balanced budget amendment would place arbitrary caps on nutrition and other safety net programs intended to grow in times of rising need.** These mechanisms would inevitably lead to significant cuts and harmful structural changes to programs designed to support low-income families.

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- ✓ **Adopt a balanced approach to controlling our nation's financial future** that supports programs that are needed and effective, safeguards programs that protect low-income families, ensures adequate revenues, and eliminates unnecessary or inefficient spending.

THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TEFAP):

TEFAP FOOD COMMODITIES help foodbanks provide nutritious food to low-income Americans in need of short-term hunger relief in partnership with local pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters.

TEFAP accounts for approximately 25% of the food moving through Ohio's foodbank network, including both mandatory commodities required by the Farm Bill and bonus commodity purchases made at the discretion of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in response to market conditions.

- ✓ **Maintain current funding for TEFAP mandatory commodities in FY 2012** and provide an increase in mandatory funding during consideration of the 2012 Farm Bill to ensure a steady supply of commodities for foodbanks.

TEFAP ADMINISTRATIVE funding supports commodity storage, transportation, and distribution within the emergency food assistance network, a resource even more critical with gas prices up over 30% over last year.

- ✓ **Provide \$100 million for TEFAP administrative funds in FY 2012** to support the infrastructure and distribution capacity necessary to meet current levels of need.

The level of TEFAP bonus commodities is projected to drop by approximately 44% (\$285 million) in FY2011 due to strong agricultural markets. The combination of rising food prices, higher transportation costs, and reduced bonus commodities will significantly impact the ability of foodbanks to meet demand in 2011 as the need for emergency food assistance remains at record levels.

- ✓ **Urge the Secretary of Agriculture to use his administrative authorities to redirect available USDA funding to increase the availability of TEFAP commodities in FY2011** to ensure adequate supplies of food through the remainder of the year.

COMMODITY SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM (CSFP):

CSFP is a critical commodity program that leverages government buying power to provide nutritious food packages to 20,463 low income older adults in Ohio each month. **Approximately 99% of Ohio's CSFP participants are seniors** with incomes of less than 130% of the Federal Poverty Line (approximately \$14,000 a year for a senior living alone). **The \$20 cost to USDA of providing commodities results in a monthly food package with an average retail value of \$50.**

- ✓ **Provide \$181.8 million for CSFP in FY2012** to maintain current caseloads and allow CSFP to expand into six additional states with USDA approved state plans (Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts and Rhode Island).

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE:

Since 2006, **The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks** has partnered with the **Corporation for National and Community Service** to administer three major National Service initiatives, including **SHARECorps**, OASHF's AmeriCorps VISTA initiative, **HarvestCorps**, OASHF's AmeriCorps State program, and a AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associate program,. Last year members **recruited 5,795 volunteers** who donated more than **41,528 hours** of their time. Members were also able to raise **more than \$500,000 in cash and in-kind donations**. OASHF's National Service initiatives are joined by 1,830 nonprofits, schools, public agencies and faith-based groups across the state, engaging more than 56,000 people in cost-effective, citizen-driven solutions to some of Ohio's greatest challenges, retaining the talent and expertise of bright, committed citizens in our State.

- ✓ **Fully fund the Corporation for National and Community Service at \$1.26 billion.**

EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER PROGRAM (EFSP):

In July 2011, FEMA announced the FY2011 grant awards from the EFSP. Awards were reduced nationally from \$200 million to \$120 million in FY2011, a reduction of 40%. This program has provided urgent assistance to millions of Americans on the verge of poverty for nearly three decades through the work of more than 13,000 nonprofit and public food banks, shelters and homelessness prevention organizations nationally. Ohio's total award for FY2011 has been reduced by **47%** to **\$4.5 million**. **47** counties will receive direct awards totaling **\$4,037,396** and an additional **\$417,344** is to be distributed to **41** counties as indirect funding. This amount is an **82% decrease** from the **\$2,310,356** received in **2010** by these same **41** counties. These funds represent a distribution of approximately **30-cents** per Ohioan living under the poverty line, unemployed, receiving food stamp assistance or qualifying as "food insecure".

- ✓ **Allocate special funding this year to support EFSP in FY2011 and return funding levels to at least \$200 million in FY2012.**

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP):

SNAP is the cornerstone of the nutrition safety net, providing over 44 million low-income participants with monthly benefits via a grocery debit card. **SNAP has proven to be one of the most responsive, efficient safety net programs.** The program expands quickly to meet rising need, as demonstrated in the recent recession, and provides an efficient benefit transfer that results in \$1.79 in local economic activity for each additional \$1 in benefits expended. **Converting SNAP to a block grant, capping or reducing funding, or imposing additional work requirements would weaken the program significantly** by eliminating its ability to adjust to increased need when our economy fluctuates and unemployment rises.

- ✓ **Oppose proposals to block grant SNAP, cap funding, impose restrictive work requirements or otherwise reduce benefits or restrict participation.**

About the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks

OASHF 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 2011, OASHF and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute over 150 million pounds of food and grocery items. To learn more about OASHF visit www.oashf.org. Follow @OASHF on Twitter and like OASHF on Facebook at www.facebook.com/oashf.

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