



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**NEW REPORTS SHOW HUNGER REMAINS ALARMINGLY HIGH ACROSS OHIO**  
*Food hardship, food insecurity rates above national average, other Midwest states*

**COLUMBUS** – The [Map the Meal Gap 2015](#) report, released today by Feeding America, reveals that food insecurity remains high throughout Ohio. The state’s 16.9 percent food insecurity rate is higher than the national rate (15.8 percent) and higher than all other Midwestern states except Missouri (17 percent). The report also found that about one in four children in Ohio (24.2 percent) live in food insecure households.

“We may be six years out from the end of the Great Recession, but the economy has not recovered for everyone,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. “More than one in six Ohioans still struggle just to afford enough food for themselves and their families, and they are forced to make tough choices every day to cope.”

A report released last week by the Food Research and Action Center called [How Hungry is America?](#) found that more than one in six Ohioans (18.1 percent) answered yes to the question, “Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?” This finding ranked Ohio 19<sup>th</sup> in the country for worst food hardship rates in 2014. Among Midwestern states, only Michigan ranked higher (14<sup>th</sup>).

“When families can’t afford adequate, nutritious food, they turn to federal nutrition programs for a woefully inadequate safety net,” said Hamler-Fugitt. “Unfortunately, since October 2013, our most vulnerable households have lost more than 258 million meals, or \$357 million in federal food stamp benefits, from changes and reductions to the food stamp program. These folks have nowhere else to turn, so they are turning to our emergency food network in record numbers.”

“We served more than 2 million different Ohioans last year,” said Hamler-Fugitt. “Hunger is not an isolated issue, and it has serious consequences for all of us. An economy cannot recover when one in six members is limited by a need to secure food. We must acknowledge that hunger is unacceptable, especially in our agriculturally strong state.”

The Ohio House of Representatives is expected to release substitute H.B. 64 later today, which will outline its framework for the 2016-17 state biennial budget. The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is seeking an amendment for an additional \$5.5 million per year for the Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program to respond to the 40 percent increase in demand for foodbank services since 2010.

**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 2014, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute over 186 million pounds of food and grocery items. The association also serves as the home of The Ohio Benefit Bank and operates the state’s largest navigator program for the Affordable Care Act. 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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