

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF SECOND HARVEST FOODBANKS

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Ohio Hunger and Poverty Trends Detailed in New Publication

New Report Chronicles Participation and Service Gaps in Ohio in Eight Federal Nutrition Programs, Calls on Congress to Seize Opportunities to Strengthen Programs

Columbus, Ohio – June 5, 2004 – The nation's federal nutrition programs have a wide reach, but too many Ohio residents continue to slip through the nutrition safety net, according to a new report released today by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks released the Ohio data and called on state policymakers, agencies, and the Ohio Congressional delegation to seize opportunities to strengthen programs that get food to struggling households.

Compiled annually by the Food Research and Action Center, *State of the States* provides a comprehensive snapshot of hunger, poverty, and federal nutrition programs for the nation and each state. The report includes detailed information on the extent of hunger, participation in eight federal nutrition programs (including food stamps, WIC and school meals), and economic data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

"By taking better advantage of these programs, we would make significant strides in addressing hunger and poverty in our communities," said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks. "But, we also need to improve and strengthen federal nutrition programs, and we should seize the opportunity when we have it. Right now, the Farm Bill gives us a chance to make a needed added federal investment in the Food Stamp Program to serve even more families struggling against hunger."

Findings from the report include:

- 64 percent of eligible individuals are participating in the Food Stamp Program in Ohio. Of the working poor that are eligible for the program, only 58 percent are participating.
- Participation in the summer food program changed by only 3.1 percent over the past ten years in Ohio.
- 13 percent (1,450,650) of Ohio residents live in poverty, and 13.6 percent are considered to be food-insecure.

Outlook / Next Steps

On the national level, there are a number of opportunities to increase investment in the nutrition programs. Congressional committees this month are taking up the Farm Bill, which includes the Food Stamp Program. The Farm Bill presents an opportunity to strengthen the Food Stamp Program by increasing currently inadequate benefit levels, expanding access to the program among the poor, and simplifying the program. Proposals to do just that have been introduced in Congress.

About the Report

FRAC's *State of the States* contains the latest data from official government sources. The federal nutrition programs covered are: Food Stamps, School Lunch, School Breakfast, Summer Food, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), WIC, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). The report also details economic and social indicators such as food insecurity, poverty, and minimum wage levels.

The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (OASHF) represents 12 foodbanks, which distribute food to more than 3,300 member charities, including food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and other food assistance organizations, located across Ohio in all 88 counties.

Attachment: Ohio Report of Demographics, Poverty and Food Insecurity

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