

November 1, 2006

Dear State Representative and Senator:

I want to thank you on behalf of the more than 3,300 member charities that rely on the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (the Association) to fill their shelves and ultimately help feed millions of Ohioans. The General Assembly's support of foodbank funding has played a critical role in getting food to our state's most vulnerable citizens.

I am pleased to present you with a copy of our State Fiscal Year 2005/2006 annual report, *Planting New Seeds*. I encourage you to review this report that highlights the extraordinary work we do throughout Ohio.

Funding from the state is essential to our mission. This funding made it possible for the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks to acquire and distribute more than **32.5 million pounds** of food to hungry Ohioans in FY05/06. And through a unique partnership with Ohio's agricultural community, our state's farmers, growers and commodity producers supplied more than 22.9 million pounds of fresh, Ohio-grown food that provided 17.9 meals to hungry Ohioans.

The Association's food assistance programs are a sound investment – one that provides fiscally responsible options for feeding hungry Ohioans. Every dollar of the \$5.5 million in state funding provided to the Association each year is used to purchase food or improve the distribution network. And, according to a study published by America's Second Harvest, our network is responsible for helping feed 207,000 Ohioans each week, 35 percent of whom are children.

The Association recognizes our network plays a valuable role in connecting low-income Ohioans to the benefits and services they need. In 2006, we launched The Benefit Bank, a Web-based tool that helps Ohioans determine their eligibility for public assistance programs. In addition to this tool, the state increased eligibility requirements for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) that will allow Ohioans with modest incomes to be eligible, for the first time, for assistance with paying their utility bills. And, as a local coalition member of the Access to Benefits Coalition, we remain committed to providing assistance to Ohio's seniors while they learn about eligibility requirements and enroll in Medicare Part D coverage.

The next few months will bring challenges as county and state administrations transition leadership. It is imperative that we maintain the Association's network of resources that help Ohio families put food on the table. Through the Association's careful maintenance and efforts to improve this network, citizens throughout Ohio's 88 counties will continue to receive food in the most efficient manner.

If you would like to be connected with your local foodbank representative or visit a food pantry in your district, please call the Association at 614/221-4336. Thank you, in advance, for your support of this essential program.

Sincerely,

Lisa Hamler-Fugitt
Executive Director
Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks