



# Continuation and Expansion of Partnership with the State of Ohio

FY 2008-2009 BUDGET REQUEST

## Feeding Ohio's Hungry:

### A request for expansion of emergency food funding in the FY 2008-2009 Budget

The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (OASHF) is requesting an additional \$15 million in funding, representing an additional \$1 million per month over the 2008-2009 biennium to support expansion of the existing grant agreement for the purchase of food and grocery products. These products are distributed through OASHF's network of 12 foodbanks to their member charities participating in the emergency food assistance program.

The partnership between OASHF and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has lasted more than a decade – working collaboratively and tirelessly to support the Ohio Food Purchase and Agricultural Clearance Programs (OFPACP), a unique, statewide purchasing program that links farmers, growers, processors and food producers with ODJFS, the Ohio Department of Agriculture and foodbanks. This collaboration allows for the purchasing of wholesome, shelf-stable foods and surplus agriculture commodities for pennies on the pound.

### Situation Overview

Ohio is facing an extraordinary crisis – the state's emergency food network, a critical safety net for the poorest of the state's citizens, is on the verge of collapsing under unprecedented demand. This "network of last resort" has fallen victim to a combination of factors that have placed needy Ohioans in a position of food insecurity and have left the 88-county hunger relief network with bare shelves.

### Contributing to this dire situation are a number of factors, including:

- A shortage of government surplus commodities;
- A sharp decrease in food donated by food manufacturers;
- A decline in federal bonus commodities;
- Growing unemployment and new job losses;
- High fuel and utility costs;
- Rising costs for food;
- Increasing home foreclosures and
- An overall sense of concern about the state's economic future.

Put simply, the donation stream that had supplemented the contributions provided by the state of Ohio has dried up. From corporate to individual donors, from manufacturers to families, the traditional means of support for the hunger relief network are no longer there.

For the first time in the history of our partnership with the state of Ohio, well over one-third of the food being distributed is from state-funded sources. Also for the first time, food donated to individual providers decreased in the fourth quarter of 2007 – a time of year, the holiday season, when individual contributions to food organizations have traditionally been at their highest. In the same quarter, the amount of food donated fell by 1.2 million pounds, while the number of people being served through emergency food relief increased by 212,000 people.

## The Need

Sadly, it has become clear that charity alone can no longer ensure that food is on the tables of our state's working poor, senior citizens, children and families. And while the modest funds OASHF has already received from the state went a long way toward addressing this issue, it clearly was not enough. Out of the \$8.5 million granted for this program, just over \$100,000 remains. And yet the shelves at so many of the state's foodbanks, particularly outside the major metropolitan areas, are empty.

The food shortages in the state's hunger relief network are severe. The need to address this problem is acute. Ohio should respond immediately.

## If Funding is Not Granted

If Ohio does not address this critical need for food, evidence of the state's economic realities will be clear. Some foodbanks and charities will reduce their hours and days of operation. Others will try to cut staff or salaries to make ends meet. Still others will close their doors altogether because they cannot survive.

But the most appalling evidence of all will be found in the households of Ohio's most vulnerable populations. Hunger, already on the rise in the state, will increase exponentially. There will be no means of feeding those who need it most. Those already in desperate situations will be faced with dire outcomes.

Food shortages will be affect other publicly funded programs, causing a subsequent increase in expenditures for health care, social welfare, education and nutrition assistance.

## If Additional Funding is Secured

OASHF is well positioned to swiftly bolster the hunger relief network. Under this proposal, we estimate that more than 1.5 million low-income Ohioans will receive nutritious food monthly. More than one-third of those will be children, and almost one-third will be elderly or disabled.

With this funding, OASHF will acquire more than 75,000,000 meals of highly nutritious protein items and fruits and vegetables from Ohio farmers, which will directly benefit local economies in our state.

Expanding the state's investment in programs that have proven results, benefit hungry Ohioans of all ages and provide indirect benefits to farmers, local communities and taxpayers makes good sense. And at a time when it is most needed, it is the right thing to do.



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