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**Job Growth Streak:**

**March data show another solid month of growth in Ohio**

Ohio added 10,800 jobs in March, according to new seasonally adjusted jobs data released today by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. In the first three months of 2018 the state has gained more jobs than in all of 2017. This is good news for our state and closes out Ohio’s best first quarter since 2012. Between December 2017 and March, Ohio gained 44,900 jobs. The first quarter of 2012, buoyed by the federal stimulus and auto rescue, resulted in 54,500 jobs. In 2017, the state added only 32,200 jobs.

“While labor force participation suggests there is still room for improvement, Ohio’s labor market is finally tightening,” said Hannah Halbert, researcher with Policy Matters Ohio. “Even so, many jobs pay too little and offer too-few hours, making it nearly impossible to afford basics like food and health care without public support. Raising the minimum wage, restoring the 40-hour work week, and supporting paid leave would make the most of this tighter labor market and help rebuild a path to the middle class.”

“While the emerging trend is positive and should elicit a sigh of relief after the abysmal 2016 and 2017 numbers, it is important to remember that monthly data is preliminary,” said Halbert. “It’s good to finally have growth, but it took a long time in Ohio, in part because the state’s public job layoffs, made necessary because of the tax cuts Ohio was doling out to the rich and corporations, slowed our recovery here.”

Ohio continues to underperform the nation’s 12-month rate for job growth (1.5 percent compared to Ohio’s 1.0 percent) and we have vastly underperformed the nation since implementing the 2005 tax overhaul. Ohio jobs have grown by just 3 percent to the nation’s 10.7 percent since then.

The unemployment data, which is based on a different survey than the one used to measure job growth, was also positive in March. The unemployment rate fell to 4.4 percent from 4.5 percent, driven by people returning to the labor force (+5,000) and finding employment (+14,000). Ohio still needs 215,000 more people working or looking for work to break even with our pre-recession labor force. The nation passed this threshold and has grown by more than 5 percent.

“Ohio is not out of the woods. A bad month or two could erase this streak and more months of solid growth are needed to take up the remaining slack in our labor market. Policymakers should now focus on supporting wage growth and ensuring shared opportunity across all regions and people. Today’s data show we can build an economy that works for all Ohioans.”

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*Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute*

*with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.*