



Shared Prosperity, Thriving Ohioans

## Testimony on SB 17 before Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

**Will Petrik**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig and members of the committee. My name is Will Petrik and I am the Budget Researcher with Policy Matters Ohio, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. Our mission is to create a more prosperous, equitable, sustainable and inclusive Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 17.

Our work focuses on supporting working Ohioans, especially those who are paid low wages, and ensuring all Ohioans, no matter where they live or what they look like, have stability, security, and dignity.

We are opposed to Senate Bill 17, because it will:

- Hurt Ohio's recovery from the recession;
- Make children, adults, and families less stable and secure;
- Harm Ohioans who have lost their job through no fault of their own; and
- Disproportionately harm Black Ohioans and Appalachian Ohioans.

**Senate Bill 17 will hurt Ohio's recovery.** The proposed legislation would make it harder for our neighbors to access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and Unemployment insurance. It would also add new barriers that will remove people from participating in these critical programs. SNAP helps keep families fed during difficult times. Medicaid helps people get the health care they need and covers more than 3 million Ohioans. Unemployment compensation helps Ohioans make it through periods of financial insecurity.

These programs boost Ohioans' purchasing power and stimulate our local economies.<sup>1</sup> This bill would prevent millions of federal dollars from flowing to Ohio communities at a time when this spending is critical for the basic dignity of all Ohioans and to help our economy recover.<sup>2</sup> We need a strong recovery for all Ohioans, and this bill moves us in the opposite direction.

**Senate Bill 17 will make children, adults, and families less secure.** We all deserve to get enough to eat and get the medical care we need. SB 17 takes that away from people. The bill will make life harder for Ohioans with lower-paying jobs and erratic schedules by creating burdensome reporting requirements for workers to access food assistance.

This proposal would hurt families trying to save and build financial security. If the bill was in effect, the state of Ohio would not help people with food unless they sell their car or home first, which sets people back. Asset tests work against goal of creating stability and security for people.

<sup>1</sup> Blinder, Alan S. and Zandi, Mark, "The Financial Crisis: Lessons for the Next One," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, <https://bit.ly/37oiDXN>; Petrik, Will, "Expand food assistance and stimulate Ohio's economy," Policy Matters Ohio, <https://bit.ly/3d7Gsai>

<sup>2</sup> Patton, Wendy and Woodrum, Amanda, "Medicaid supports Ohio jobs," Policy Matters Ohio, <https://bit.ly/2NiJFt0>

This legislation includes provisions that will prevent Ohioans in need from accessing food assistance. The state of Maine ended its SNAP photo ID requirement in 2019, because it “threatens eligible Mainers’ access to assistance,” according to the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.<sup>3</sup>

This proposal would make life harder for the quarter of all Ohioans who use Medicaid for health coverage. This proposal works against the best interest of the people of Ohio by excluding 3 million Ohioans from the opportunity to review or weigh-in on changes to their health coverage. How would you feel if your insurer proposed large changes to your coverage, and you had no chance to evaluate that change? This bill treats Ohioans with disdain and disrespect. Rather than limiting access to food and health care during a pandemic and a recession, we should be working to try to stabilize children, families, and communities.

**Senate Bill 17 would harm Ohioans who were laid off from their job through no fault of their own.** If SB 17 was in effect today, your 60-year-old relative who was laid off due to the pandemic could lose her health care and foundation of security. If she was able to access Ohio unemployment compensation and made an innocent mistake that resulted in an overpayment, the Department of Job and Family Services would be required to go after her as zealously as if she had committed fraud. When thousands of Ohioans are flocking to food pantries and looking for assistance in making their rent or mortgage payments, lawmakers should consider a waiver of non-fraud overpayments for equity and good conscience, like 29 other states have done.

**Finally, SB 17 disproportionately would harm Black and Appalachian Ohioans.** The pandemic has upended life in Ohio. Tens of thousands of Ohioans have been laid off. Many are working hard to put food on the table, pay the rent, and afford the basics, but still aren’t paid enough to make ends meet. The pandemic has hit Black Ohioans the hardest.

This is not due to individual choice or a lack of personal responsibility. It’s a result of years of segregation, discrimination and policy choices that excluded Black Ohioans from building wealth and financial security and from education and housing opportunities. These state and national policies have forced Black Ohioans into low-paying jobs that expose them to COVID-19 and into communities exposed to more pollution.

SB 17 would exacerbate these issues. Eligibility and access restrictions for essential programs, like SNAP and Medicaid, disproportionately harm Black and brown children and families. While the majority of people who participate in the SNAP program in Ohio are white, Black Ohioans disproportionately participate in SNAP.<sup>4</sup> New proposals that create barriers to SNAP will disproportionately harm Black Ohioans.

The maps below show your Senate districts. They include the number and percentage of people who participate in Medicaid and the number and percentage of households that participate in the SNAP program. If enacted, SB 17 would mean fewer federal resources flowing to Ohio communities for food and health care, particularly Ohioans who live in larger cities and Appalachia.

I urge you all to oppose this legislation. SB 17 will, if passed, slow down Ohio’s recovery and harm residents with low-incomes in your districts and across the state.

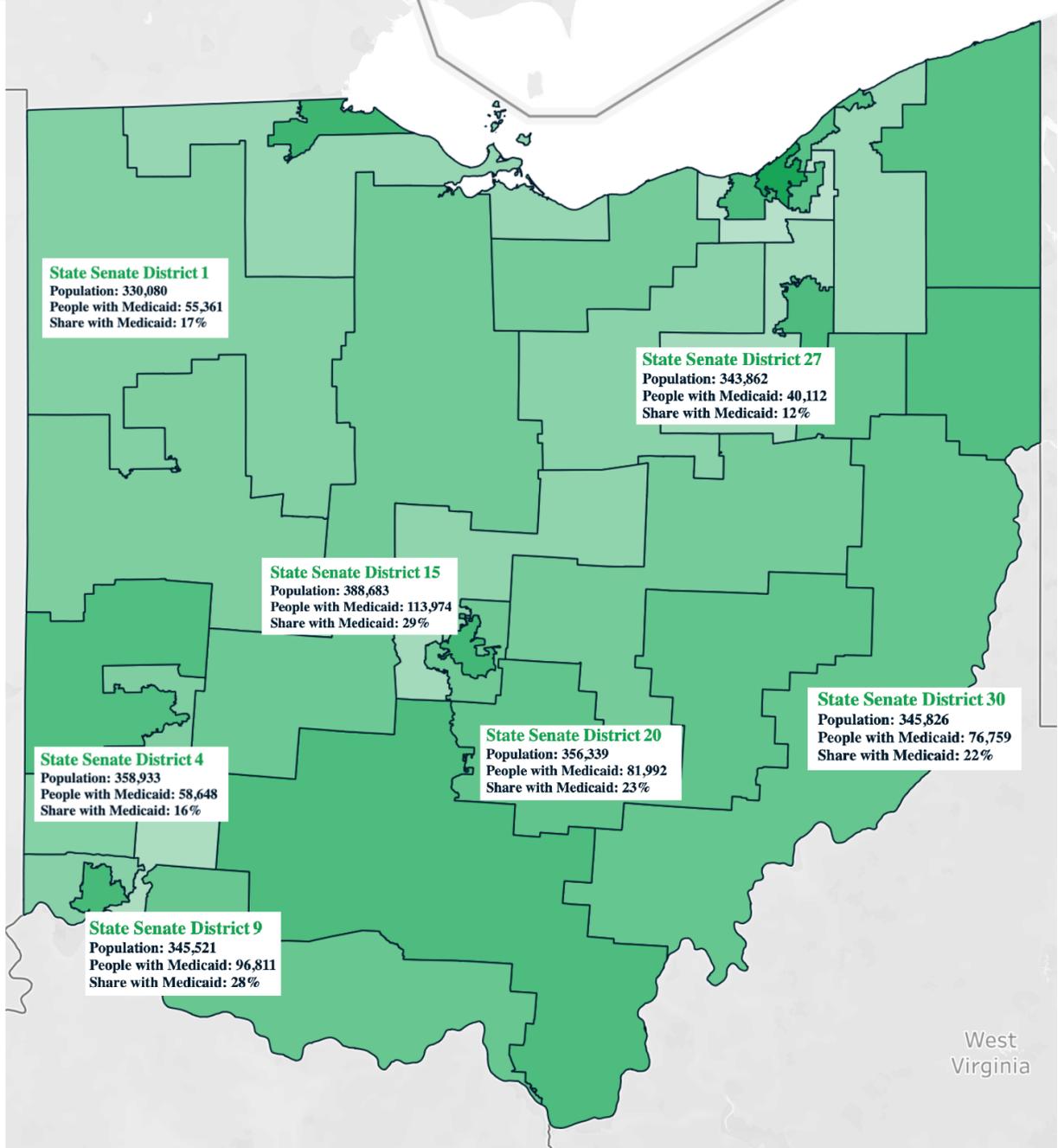
---

<sup>3</sup> Acquisto, Alex, “Mills reverses another signature LePage move by pulling photos from EBT cards,” Bangor Daily News. <https://bit.ly/31ZMMYR>

<sup>4</sup> White, Adam, “Who receives food assistance in Ohio?” Center for Community Solutions. <https://bit.ly/3phdDuc>

## Percent of population that uses Medicaid for health coverage, by senate district

More than 3 million Ohioans, or 25% of the state, are covered by Medicaid



% of people participating in Medicaid

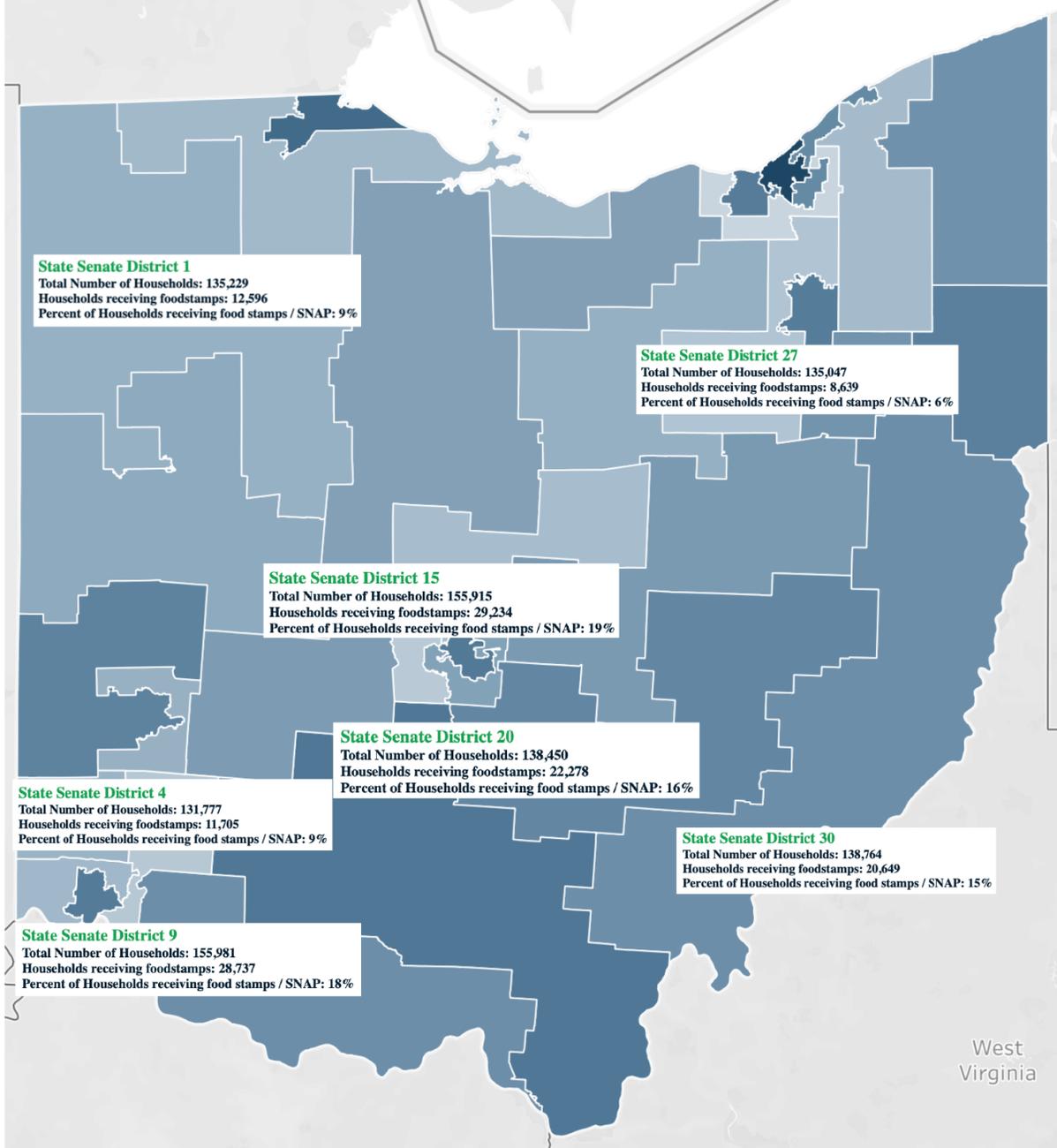


0%

40%

Source: Data from American Community Survey via the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

**Percent of population that uses SNAP to afford food, by Senate District**  
 More than 1.46 million Ohioans participated in the SNAP program in November 2020



% of households receiving food assistance / SNAP



Source: Data from American Community Survey via the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Public Assistance Monthly Statistics, November 2020