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# POLICY MATTERS OHIO

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Postal Regulatory Commission  
Field Hearings on Optimization and Consolidation Initiative  
Independence, Ohio  
Testimony by Pamela Rosado Outreach Coordinator, Policy Matters Ohio  
September 16, 2009

Good afternoon Chairwoman Goldway and esteemed members of the commission. I am Pamela Rosado outreach coordinator for Policy Matters Ohio a non-profit non-partisan research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today on this critical issue.

As the United States Postal Service faces deep financial losses in 2009 and beyond, decision-makers are considering closing hundreds of retail post offices and branches across the United States. In Ohio, 32 post offices are under review as possible sites for closure.

Closure of post office branches will result in reduced accessibility to postal services, reduced employment, and possible reductions in economic activity in neighborhoods where the post office is one of the anchors of a commercial center.

The offices being considered for closure are disproportionately located in low-income neighborhoods in Ohio. As the table at the end of this document shows, 79 percent of the neighborhoods in danger of losing their local post office have median household incomes below the state median household income (this excludes three neighborhoods for which income data were not immediately available). Ten of the post offices are in zip codes with median household incomes below \$30,000 and six are in zip codes with median household incomes below \$20,000.

When accounting for the populations of these areas the numbers are less lopsided, but the possible cuts still disproportionately affect low-income areas. Certain offices in extremely low-income areas have relatively low populations, which could skew our data and make it seem as though more low-income residents are being affected than really are. Most notable of these is the Akron Downtown Station Office, where the zip code surrounding the office only has 904 residents. However, this is the exception to the rule. The vast majority of the twenty three areas with median incomes below the state's median income have populations over 10,000. Of the 579,375 people living in zip codes with a post office under review, 401,839 of them – 69.3 percent – live in areas with median incomes below Ohio's median income.

There are many reasons these numbers concern us. First and foremost is their implication for low-income neighborhood residents' access to postal services. These residents have less access to personal transportation and less disposable income for fuel and public transportation. They also have



less access to private mailing options that are more prevalent in high-income areas. Removing a branch from their communities may constrain their ability to use the U.S. Postal Service.

Our second concern relates to eliminating a source of decent civil service employment in some of Ohio's poorest communities. While current employees are expected to be transferred instead of eliminated, a move we applaud, long-term it will mean fewer jobs in proximity to these already financially-challenged communities.

Third, in financially-strained communities, the presence of the post office as a neighborhood anchor is more vital than in wealthier areas. Businesses and residents who rely on these services will have one less reason to stay in these communities and blighted areas that can least afford it will be burdened with one more empty storefront.

An additional issue which we were unable to examine in the limited time available is the degree to which these closures may be contributing to sprawl and detracting from urban vitality and density. We encourage others to do further research to determine whether the closures are disproportionately in densely populated areas.

We understand that financial constraints may force some post office closures and we recognize that no community likes to lose its public services and institutions. Nonetheless, the disproportionate effect on low-income neighborhoods is troubling. The United States Postal Service is a public service with an admirable history of making mail delivery affordable and available to people across the economic spectrum. Cost cutting measures that disproportionately affect low-income residents should be reexamined and other options should be pursued.

Our research is only a brief examination of the plans to close post offices throughout Ohio. We have found that low-income neighborhoods will suffer the majority of these closures and we encourage the USPS to conduct additional research and review this more closely to avoid an unreasonable burden on Ohio's poorest residents. We know that the USPS procedures call for analysis of access issues as a part of the consolidation initiative. While we understand that the USPS has chosen these branches for a variety of reasons based on their research, we hope that consideration of continuing accessible postal service to low-income residents will be included as an important priority in the decision-making process.



| <b>City</b>                         | <b>Post Office</b>           | <b>Median Household Income</b> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Akron                               | Akron Chapel Hill            | \$30,817.00                    |
|                                     | Akron Downtown Station       | \$8,676.00                     |
|                                     | Akron East Akron             | \$35,432.00                    |
|                                     | Akron Maple Valley           | \$31,336.00                    |
| Brook Park                          | Cleveland Brook Park         | \$46,280.00                    |
| Canton                              | Canton Dueber                | \$34,976.00                    |
| Cincinnati                          | Cumminsville                 | \$27,563.00                    |
|                                     | East End                     | \$46,694.00                    |
|                                     | Madisonville Station         | \$36,440.00                    |
|                                     | Newton Branch                | \$62,149.00                    |
|                                     | Reed Hartman Finance         | \$66,848.00                    |
|                                     | Saylor Park                  | \$60,470.00                    |
|                                     | Stock Yards                  | \$12,219.00                    |
| Cleveland                           | AMC Finance Unit             | NA                             |
|                                     | Cranwood                     | \$35,378.00                    |
|                                     | Edgewater                    | \$40,537.00                    |
|                                     | Huntington Finance           | \$7,236.00                     |
|                                     | Kamms                        | \$37,540.00                    |
|                                     | Maple Heights                | \$40,407.00                    |
|                                     | Shore Finance                | \$36,157.00                    |
| Columbus                            | Busch Finance Station        | NA                             |
|                                     | Linden finance               | \$25,972.00                    |
|                                     | Olde Town Finance            | \$20,893.00                    |
| Dayton                              | Centerville Finance          | \$60,170.00                    |
|                                     | Mid City Finance             | \$30,661.00                    |
|                                     | Station B                    | \$13,607.00                    |
|                                     | Vet Adm Finance              | NA                             |
| Hamilton                            | Lindenwald                   | \$36,230.00                    |
| Mansfield                           | Mansfield Lincoln Retail     | \$35,352.00                    |
| Toledo                              | Midtown Sta. Toledo          | \$25,161.00                    |
| Youngstown                          | Youngstown Eastside Station  | \$17,637.00                    |
|                                     | Youngstown Southside Station | \$19,677.00                    |
| <b>Ohio Median Household Income</b> |                              | <b>\$40,956.00</b>             |

**Source:** Data is from the U.S. Census Bureau's search engine, American Fact Finder. All income data comes from the 2000 Census. This information can be found at <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Income data for three zip codes marked NA were not immediately available.



