



## **Press Release**

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### **Human service advocates push state to seek federal waiver of time limits on food aid in all eligible Ohio communities**

Human services advocates joined together – again – to call on the Kasich administration to request full federal food assistance in all eligible Ohio counties and communities.

A new Policy Matters Ohio report details the places eligible for a federal waiver of time limits in 2017. The state will submit its request in the next month or so.

For the past three years, Ohio has not requested a waiver in all eligible places. As a result, Ohio receives less federal food aid than it might.

“The failure to request a waiver of time limits in all eligible areas has hurt people in urban areas like Cleveland, but also in rural places, like Vinton County,” said Wendy Patton, senior project director for Policy Matters Ohio. “We again call on the Kasich administration to maximize its use of federal resources so that hungry Ohioans can meet their most basic need – food.”

“Hunger is a real issue faced by real Ohioans. Our statewide charitable hunger relief network serves more than 2 million different Ohioans each year,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. “We are doing everything we can to help families keep enough food on the table as they cope with stagnant wages and rising household costs, but our network can’t begin to make up for the loss of critical federal food assistance benefits. It’s simply inexcusable to pass up any opportunity to connect Ohioans with access to adequate nutrition.”

Linda Cook, senior attorney with the Ohio Poverty Law Center, said many Ohioans receiving food assistance want to work and support themselves and their families, but face multiple barriers to employment or struggle to find stable, decent paying jobs. “Ohio should maximize the food aid available under the USDA’s rules to help those with the fewest resources meet their basic food needs while it strengthens work supports and workforce training and education opportunities which, to date, have not adequately served those who need it most,” she said.”

The Ohio Council of Churches is also urging Ohio leaders to expand federal food aid.

“Food aid helping up to 35 counties and 10 cities can reduce hunger around thousands of dining tables across Ohio in families impacted by the financial stranglehold of poverty and unemployment,” said the council’s Tom Smith.

Steve Wagner, executive director of Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio, noted that while Ohio has made great strides in increasing access to health care for community members with low incomes, lack of access to nutritious food undermines that progress. “Meeting Ohioans' basic needs, including food, means they can lead healthier lives so they can work, support their families, and participate in more fully in their community,” he said.

Bill Faith, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, noted that the cost of rent has increased much faster than working Ohioans’ stagnant incomes in recent years, too often leaving little left for food, medicine and other necessities.

“Many Ohioans have been left behind by the low-wage economy and are still having a tough time meeting basic human needs,” he said. “Denying food assistance, amounting to about \$5 a day, to people who have next to nothing just seems mean-spirited. There’s no good reason we can’t treat struggling Ohioans better than this, especially since this program has no financial cost to the state.”