

The Columbus Dispatch

Opinion

Letter: Cuts would hurt hungry Ohio kids

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As Mid-Ohio Foodbank responds to the needs of our community's hungry neighbors, it is alarming to see a presidential budget proposal punitive in both funding and policy. The president's budget blueprint would cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's (SNAP, the former food-stamp program) funding by \$213 billion in the next 10 years, roughly 30 percent, leaving vulnerable Ohioans, including 1 in 4 children, to figure out where their next meal is coming from.

Equally concerning are policy changes to eliminate senior food programs and restrict recipients' ability to access fresh foods. Food banking's fundamental tenet is connecting surplus food to the hungry. When nearly 14 billion pounds of food are plowed under yearly, it makes no sense to replace surplus fresh food solely with shelf food. There is evidence-based research affirming nutritious food has a direct impact on health. It's time we view SNAP through a new lens, that is, as public health policy — not entitlement.

Mid-Ohio Foodbank distributed nearly 70 million pounds of food last year — enough food for 155,000 meals each day; 60 percent of which was fresh, to nearly 525,000 clients. The responses we provide are threatened by this reckless proposal by taking nutritional food off the table of a growing number of Ohioans.

Protecting the health of the poor through food assistance is not a partisan issue. What does it say about us as human beings when we turn our backs on those most in need?

Matt Habash

President/CEO

Mid-Ohio Foodbank

Grove City