

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 2, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

As the Member of Congress representing Ohio's 13th Congressional District, I write to you regarding the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) recent decision to cut essential food assistance programs. This includes USDA's Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA), which provides millions in funding for state and local governments to purchase local and regional foods for foodbanks. Families in my district and farmers in my state cannot afford cuts to these programs, and I urge you to reverse the Administration's \$471.5 million cut and reinstate this critical program.<sup>1</sup>

In my district, more than 13 percent of individuals and 20 percent of children in Summit and Stark Counties are food insecure.<sup>2</sup> For many of these families, this means choosing between transportation, utilities, and even medicine and food. Especially as we continue to see prices rise, we have seen a continued increase in foodbank distribution and demand. The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank in my district provided a record breaking 31.4 million meals in 2024, a 16 percent increase over the previous year and an even higher figure than during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, federal funding has allowed foodbanks across the state of Ohio to reach more families in need.

The LFPA program, created in 2022 to improve the food supply chain resiliency, has awarded Ohio \$26.5 million over three years to purchase foods produced by Ohio farmers within 400 miles of the delivery destination. In the first year of this program, Ohio's LFPA program procured over 4.5 million pounds of nutritious local foods from 164 individual Ohio farmers, more than 60 percent of whom are socially disadvantaged and need this business the most. Farmers have told us first hand how this program allows them to increase their revenue and uplift their businesses, while also allowing those in need access to some of the most nutritious and high quality food Ohio has to offer.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that this program has demonstrated significant success, and allows our foodbanks to serve more much-needed meals while also supporting our local farmers and economy.

On March 8, 2025, states and foodbanks were notified by USDA that they would no longer be receiving funding under the LFPA program, amounting to a \$471.5 billion cut in funding for healthy local foods. However, when questioned about the impact of these cuts, you claimed that this funding is "nonessential."<sup>5</sup> In my district, and across the country, putting food on the table is not "nonessential." Through this funding, the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank was expecting to receive 450,000 pounds of food for this summer to be distributed to those in need. While this program was created during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has had an immense impact on our broader food supply resiliency by supporting local farmers and our foodbanks as they

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2024/12/10/usda-announces-availability-113-billion-local-food-programs>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.akroncantonfoodbank.org/hunger-our-community>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.akroncantonfoodbank.org/news/foodbank-kick-harvest-hunger-campaign-demand-food-remains-high#:~:text=In%202024%2C%20it%20provided%20access,being%20distributed%20from%20our%20facilities.>

<sup>4</sup> [https://ohiofoodbanks.org/site/assets/files/2917/lfpa\\_report\\_4.pdf](https://ohiofoodbanks.org/site/assets/files/2917/lfpa_report_4.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.foxnews.com/video/6369883828112>

continue to see higher numbers of families in need of assistance. Under the last Trump Administration, the USDA provided more than 4 million pounds of food to help mitigate rising costs related to trade policy.<sup>6</sup> Especially as the Administration continues to push for tariffs that will raise food costs, I urge you to reverse these cuts and increase support to our foodbanks so that they can continue to feed our communities.<sup>7</sup>

My community relies on foodbanks, and these programs are essential to reducing hunger while supporting our local farmers that are likely to struggle the most under rising costs. We cannot afford to cut funding that helps families put food on the table when costs are expected to rise, and I encourage you to reverse these cuts, reinstate the LFPA Program, and identify ways to support our farmers and foodbanks.

Sincerely,

  
Emilia Strong Sykes  
Member of Congress

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wosu.org/wksu-stories/2018-12-17/akron-canton-regional-foodbank-benefiting-from-trump-trade-war-but-still-needs-community-support>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-tariffs-what-will-cost-more-inflation/>