



March 22, 2022

Governor DeWine and Leaders of the Ohio General Assembly:

We are grateful for your actions to protect the people of Ohio and provide emergency assistance and resources early in the pandemic. These programs, resources and investments held families together and supported their most basic needs.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allotted \$5.36 billion in flexible State Fiscal Recovery Funds to recover, repay, restore and rebuild from the coronavirus pandemic. State elected leaders have allotted more than three-fourths of Ohio's first payment of \$2.7 billion, leaving more than \$3.3 billion to be assigned by December 31, 2024 and spent by the end of 2026.

As the impact of the virus continues, earlier allocations of federal and state support, resources and assistance are dwindling and Ohioans continue to struggle to meet their basic food, housing and health needs while trying to work and keep themselves and their families safe and healthy.

While current levels of need across communities are significant, we need to also address the most pressing issues that will keep individuals and communities from a fair and equitable recovery from the pandemic. We have the opportunity to address housing affordability, increase access to health care, close the digital divide, and support workers and businesses to ensure long-term community resiliency.

These ARPA recovery funds represent an opportunity to support and invest in the health and safety of Ohio families now and for years to come.

We—the leaders of Advocates for Ohio's Future, the undersigned organizations and concerned Ohioans—urge you to implement a public, accessible, transparent planning process to inform a thorough investment plan that supports strong, equitable recovery for all Ohioans from the ongoing health and economic pandemic.

With more than a year and a half to encumber the funds, state leaders have the time to seek out meaningful public input and proposals for a robust state recovery plan. Precedent exists for public hearing processes on the best, most effective uses for large sums of money from various settlements awarded to Ohio. A task force should be assembled to review, deliberate and make recommendations for a recovery plan and should include state officials, stakeholders, community leaders and those who have been disparately impacted by the pandemic.

Over \$3 billion in recovery funds presents a historic opportunity for the state to make investments that have long- term impacts on the security and stability of families as they recover from the pandemic. Working together with the people of Ohio to identify and prioritize the needs of their communities through an open, public, transparent process will strengthen our state's recovery and put us on firm footing to move forward from an unprecedented public health and economic crisis.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Ohio's Future

### **AOF Steering Committee Members**

Tara Britton, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, The Center for Community Solutions

Tracy Nájera, PhD, Executive Director, Children's Defense Fund-Ohio

Michael Corey, Executive Director, Human Service Chamber of Franklin County

Megan Burke, State Program and Policy Director, Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition

Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, Executive Director, The Ohio Association of Foodbanks

Teresa Lampl, CEO, The Ohio Council of Behavioral Health and Family Services Providers

Susan Jagers, Director, Ohio Poverty Law Center

Rebecca Kusner, Director, Ohio Workforce Coalition

Will Petrik, Budget Researcher, Policy Matters Ohio

Angela Sausser, Executive Director, Public Children Services Association of Ohio

Steve Wagner, Executive Director, Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio

### **Organizations**

Jerry and Mary Porter, Directors, Caring Friends Food Pantry

Emily Lundgard, State and Local Policy Director, Enterprise Community Partners

Diana Turoff, CEO and President, Finance Fund

Noreen Warnock, Co-Founder, Director of Advocacy and Community Outreach, Local Matters

Tim White, Advocacy Manager, Mid-Ohio Food Collective

Leslie Runion, Food Pantry Coordinator, North Lewisburg United Methodist Church

Rebecca Kusner, Principal, R4 Workforce

Fara Waugh, CEO, SourcePoint

Judy Richardson, Director of Operations, Urbana Youth Center

Jenney Rice, Community Outreach Pastor, Vineyard Columbus Church

### **AOF Endorsing Organizations**

Trisha Rayner, CDO/VP External Affairs, Freestore Foodbank

Holly Pendell, Associate Vice President, National Multiple Sclerosis Society

Diana King, Chair, Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality

Tyra Jackson, Executive Director, Second Harvest Food Bank of Clark, Champaign & Logan Counties

Julie Chase-Morefield, President & CEO, Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio

Terry Perdue, Executive Director, Shared Harvest Foodbank

Emily Gallion, Advocacy Manager, The Foodbank, Inc.

Tommie Harner, CEO, West Ohio Food Bank

### **Concerned Constituents**

Julia Boyle, Philo, OH

Bryan Bumgarner, Richwood, OH

Grover Butler, Springfield, OH

Dr. John W. Cavanaugh, Columbus, OH

Glinda Dames-Fincher, Mayfield Heights, OH

Elizabetta Deblasio, Tallmadge, OH

Reginald Dyck, Cincinnati, OH

Steven Federman, Ottawa Hills, OH

Mary Catherine Grayem, Columbus, OH

Judith Hofmann, Fostoria, OH

Jan Kelemen, North Olmsted, OH

Joe Miller, Middletown, OH

Joree Novotny, Columbus, OH

Kimberly Reed, Portsmouth, OH

Teresa Shaffer, Van Wert, OH

Patricia Siler, Enon, OH

Lisa Splawinski, Cleveland, OH

Ben Stein, Cleveland, OH

**Concerned Constituents Continued**

Lenore Teevan, Beavercreek, OH

Stephanie Tompkins, Youngstown, OH

Audrey Vanzant, Springfield, OH