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## Ohio Urban Community Action Network (OUCAN)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **We need the opportunity for all Ohioans to Prosper**

Ohio families deserve a state budget that treats them with dignity and provides the resources they need to prosper in their everyday lives. This combination, which also leads to ending the cycle of poverty – especially in our urban areas – is sorely lacking in the version of the 2024-2025 budget released last week by the Ohio Senate.

In Ohio’s bifurcated economy where the gap between the haves and the have-nots continues to widen, the Ohio Urban Community Action Network is committed to social and economic security for the one million Ohioans living in poverty. OUCAN agencies serve 56 percent of this population including half of all White Ohioans in poverty, 75 percent of all Latino Ohioans in poverty, and more than 90 percent of Black Ohioans.

We serve a diverse array of households in need of multiple supports such as Head Start and Early Head Start, affordable and safe housing, workforce/career development, weatherization, energy assistance, and more. OUCAN organizations know how to connect with communities and create and implement solutions because we have been part of communities for over 50 years. This depth of community knowledge and long-term and steadfast commitment is what it takes to address poverty.

For Ohio to be the heart of it all, we urge the Senate to revisit the proposed budget and restore critical programs and funding for services that support a thriving community for all:

- Restore new affordable tax credit to the House’s version at \$500 million attracting developers to build low-income housing by making state tax credits accessible to projects

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receiving federal aid. We need more funding to address Ohio's 250,000 housing unit deficit, not less.

- Maintain the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) as an independent organization with a proposed budget of \$16.8 million for fiscal year 2024 and \$17.4 million for fiscal year 2025.
- Fund the Ohio Association of Food Banks at \$39.5 million.
- Restore half a billion dollars for critical programs that support access to quality childcare and promote maternal and infant health.
- Implement a state-funded minimum SNAP benefit for older Ohioans and bring back the Healthy Aging Grant to provide a variety of services for aging and senior populations.
- Remove work requirements for Medicaid while restoring:
  - Coverage to both pregnant women and children under age 19 with incomes up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.
  - Continuous Medicaid enrollment for Medicaid-eligible children from birth through age 3
  - A five-year program to cover doula services provided to a Medicaid enrollee by a certified doula with a Medicaid provider agreement.

We are experiencing uncertain times. Combined with inflation, gun violence, and unusual climate conditions, the Senate's severe cuts to crucial human services will make the next two years in Ohio insufferable for many who are already in need and struggling to make ends meet.

It is not too late to #ProtectOhioans. Through policy restoration and funding for key services and programs, we can collectively provide opportunities for all Ohioans to prosper.

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The mission of OUCAN is to empower Ohio's urban Community Action Agencies through education, networking, and advocating for policies that alleviate poverty and promote self-sufficiency.

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Community Action Commission of Erie, Huron & Richland Counties, Inc.  
IMPACT Community Action  
Lorain County Community Action Agency  
Mahoning Youngstown Community Action Partnership

Miami Valley Community Action Partnership  
Pathway, Inc.  
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