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OHIO LEADERS SHOULD WORK TO STABILIZE SAFETY NET

COLUMBUS - In the face of rising fuel and food prices and widespread unemployment, Ohio leaders still have the opportunity in the next three weeks to stabilize the safety net for vulnerable Ohioans by prioritizing any new revenue for health, human service, and early care & education programs, according to Advocates for Ohio's Future.

“Gas prices continue to increase, employment remains stagnant, and people are falling deeper into poverty,” said AOF Co-Chair Gayle Channing Tenenbaum. “Investments in health and human service supports would give vulnerable Ohioans some much-needed relief as policy makers work on the budget.”

Following passage of the biennial budget by the Ohio Senate last night, Channing Tenenbaum pointed out the following examples of growing need and demand:

Item	Three Months Ago	Today
Gallon of unleaded gas ¹	\$3.49	\$3.86
Gallon of milk ²	\$3.30	\$3.60
New unemployment claims ³	10,802	11,740
Initial claims for Unemployment Insurance ⁴	53,638	59,359
Layoff (WARN) notices ⁵	738	1,002

¹Source: http://gasbuddy.com/gb_retail_price_chart.aspx (March 15, 2011 vs. June 6, 2011)

²Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (January 2011 vs. April 2011) and Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index

³George Zeller (from 2nd week of March and 4th week of May)

⁴<http://ohiolmi.com/proj/Indicators/LI.pdf> (February 2011 vs. April 2011)

⁵<http://www.jfs.ohio.gov/warn/current.stm> (March 2011 vs. May 2011)

Co-Chair Margaret Hulbert recognized several areas where the Senate increased support for safety-net programs, including \$15 million more for home-based services for seniors, restored funding for the Ohio Housing Trust Fund, increased funding in programs for mothers and babies (Help Me Grow), and some support for adoption subsidies and kinship programs. “Despite these important gains, more is needed to keep pace with the rising demand for services and to stabilize the safety net for those in need,” Hulbert said. “As advocates for Ohio’s most vulnerable children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities, we cannot let our elected officials off the hook.”

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Advocates for Ohio's Future urges Ohio leaders to prioritize any new revenue projections in the next three weeks for emergency food, mental health and addiction treatment services, early childhood programs, local government social services, and home-based care for seniors and people with disabilities.

Noting that Ohioans are standing in increasingly longer lines for food, shelter, and behavioral health services across the state, Channing Tenenbaum concluded, "With more people sliding into poverty, unable to provide breakfast and lunch for their children or relief from their own rising sense of hopelessness, these safety-net programs have become critical supports for Ohio's workforce until the economy recovers."

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Advocates for Ohio's Future works to maintain vital public services - health, human services, and early care & education - at a level that meets people's basic needs and protects our state's most vulnerable populations.