



OLBCF: BLACK PAPERS

Policy Brief

Theme: Fresh and Affordable Food

Bill/Policy: “Create the Ohio Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force,” Senate Bill 233

Status: Referred to the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Date: March 2026 | **Lead:** Yassah Tommy

THE QUICK CLIP

Senate Bill 233, “Create the Ohio Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force,” establishes a task force to develop recommendations for the General Assembly to strengthen Ohio’s state, local, and organic food systems. The task force brings together farmers, stakeholders, and policymakers to evaluate barriers to production and distribution and propose strategies to improve support for local agriculture, expand access to locally grown foods, and promote more sustainable farming practices statewide.¹

THE STATE HOUSE BREAKDOWN

- **Current Status:** Referred to the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee on 10/1/25
- **Before SB 233:** Ohio currently does not have an official statewide government-led task force dedicated to developing and promoting policies that improve access to fresh, affordable food. Instead, local and nonprofit organizations, such as the Ohio Food Policy Network and the Franklin County Local Food Council, work with state agencies, counties, and cities.² Their efforts focus on increasing access to organic and fresh foods, supporting related policy initiatives, and raising awareness about food insecurity across Ohio.
- **After SB 233:** SB 233 establishes the Ohio Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force, a government-run task force comprised of 29 members appointed by the governor. These members include representatives from state agencies, organic farmers, food processors, and community organizations. Their responsibilities involve developing policies and funding ideas to overcome barriers to increasing local food production and educating the public on the benefits of buying locally. They are also tasked with improving opportunities for land preservation and acquisition, and improving access to fresh, affordable food in both rural and urban areas. The task force is required to present its recommendations to the General Assembly within two years of the bill's enactment, and it will be dissolved afterward.³
- **The "Why":** Food insecurity, which refers to the difficulty in affording sufficient, healthy, and nutritious food, is becoming an increasingly critical issue. Senator Hicks-Hudson (D) points out, in her committee address, that in 2022, 1,653,610 Ohio residents, or 14%, faced food insecurity. She also notes barriers and that Ohio ranks 34th nationally in food access and insecurity, with 67 of its 88 counties containing at least one food desert.⁴ SB 233 is needed to fill this gap by creating a state-led task force that can unify stakeholders, identify

systemic barriers, and develop concrete policy and funding recommendations. By establishing a formal structure within government, the bill aims to create more coordinated, effective, and scalable solutions to improve food access across Ohio.⁵

THE IMPACT ON OHIOANS

How could this affect our families, friends, and community?

- **Economic & Social Stakes:** In Ohio, 1.8 million residents, or 15.3%, were experiencing food insecurity in 2023.⁶ Structural barriers such as poverty, limited transportation, and unequal access to grocery stores play a role, disproportionately impacting marginalized communities, including rural areas, low-income neighborhoods, and children (20.1% of Ohio children faced food insecurity in 2023).⁷ Food insecurity extends beyond hunger, adversely affecting physical and mental health and increasing risks of obesity and heart disease.⁸ Meanwhile, many local farmers struggle to maintain steady markets, even as nearby communities lack access to fresh produce, highlighting a disconnect in Ohio's food system.

By strengthening local agriculture and distribution networks, SB 233 aims to expand access to fresh, affordable food and connect Ohio farmers to more stable local markets. This supports both sides of the system, including consumers facing food insecurity and producers seeking reliable demand. Through collaboration and targeted policy recommendations, SB 233 seeks to reduce gaps in food access, improve affordability, and strengthen the state's food infrastructure, ultimately reducing food insecurity across Ohio.⁹

- **The Disparity:** In 2023, 31% of Black Ohioans experienced food insecurity, making them the most affected racial group in Ohio.¹⁰ This compares to 13% of White Ohioans and 26% of Latino Ohioans.¹¹ In predominantly Black communities, additional historical, systemic, and structural barriers include lower access to grocery stores, higher rates of poverty, and limited transportation options.¹² SB 233 has the potential to address these disparities by establishing a more equitable and coordinated food system throughout Ohio. Increased investment in local food systems and distribution networks can improve access to nutritious food for historically marginalized populations, particularly Black Ohioans. By strengthening connections between local farmers and these communities, SB 233 can help close access gaps and foster economic opportunities.¹³
- **Real Life Implications:** The initiatives stemming from SB 233 will help the General Assembly pinpoint food access gaps and allocate funds more efficiently. By shifting away from fragmented efforts, it encourages sustained coordination among stakeholders, leading to more effective use of resources. As these strategies are implemented, improved access to fresh, affordable food is expected, which can enhance health outcomes, ease financial burdens, and reduce food insecurity—especially in the most vulnerable communities.

ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

- **After the Task Force:** SB 233 seeks to create a dedicated group to recommend strategies for the General Assembly to address food insecurity in Ohio and improve access to fresh, affordable food. While this is a positive first step, the main challenge will be turning these recommendations into concrete actions.

The effectiveness of the Ohio Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force depends on how well its objectives are executed and tracked. Ongoing bipartisan support is essential, given that food insecurity affects Ohioans across various backgrounds and communities. It is important to understand that food insecurity goes beyond hunger; it impacts individuals' ability to work, socialize, and participate fully in daily life. Addressing this issue is crucial, as it connects personal well-being with the overall health of communities.

The task force must develop policies that address barriers to fresh, affordable food across all disproportionately impacted communities — including Black and rural Ohioans, low-income families, children, seniors, and people with disabilities to meaningfully decrease food insecurity across Ohio.

DIRECT ACTION: THE PROACTIVE RESPONSE

How to move from reacting to leading.

- **Immediate Action:** Use the Ohio Legislature website to track SB 233 and receive updates on hearings, amendments, and votes.
- **Community Action:** Share this brief with your community: friends, colleagues, and family.
- **Deep Dive:** Contact your local representative to seek their support for this bill, or contact local food banks, pantries, and advocacy groups to raise awareness about this issue if they are unaware. Ask how you can help support efforts to pass this bill.

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References

¹ Ohio Senate. *Senate Bill 233 (136th General Assembly): To create the Ohio Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force As Introduced*. Columbus (OH): Ohio General Assembly; 2025. Available from: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/136/sb233>

² Franklin County Local Food Council. *About*. Columbus (OH): Franklin County Local Food Council; [cited 2026 Mar 31]. Available from: <https://www.fclocalfoodcouncil.org/about>; Ohio Food Policy Network. *About*. Columbus (OH): Ohio Food Policy Network. Available from: <https://ohiofpn.org/about>

³ Ohio Senate. *Senate Bill 233 (136th General Assembly): Bill Analysis, As Introduced*. Columbus (OH): Ohio Legislative Service Commission; 2025. Available from: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/136/sb233/documents>

⁴ *Graphic of the week: Food insecurity in Ohio*. Columbus (OH): Health Policy Institute of Ohio; 2024 Sep 13. Available from: <https://www.healthpolicyohio.org/health-policy-news/2024/09/13/graphic-of-the-week-food-insecurity-in-ohio>

⁵ Ohio Senate. *Senate Bill 233 (136th General Assembly): Committee Activity – Sponsor Testimony by State Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson*. Columbus (OH): Ohio Legislature; 2025. Available from: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/136/sb233/committee>

⁶ Feeding America. *Map the Meal Gap 2025: Overall Food Insecurity in Ohio (2023 data)*. Available at: <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/overall/ohio>

⁷ Feeding America. *Map the Meal Gap 2025: Child Food Insecurity in Ohio (2023 data)*. Available at: <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/child/ohio>

⁸ Odoms-Young A, Brown AGM, Agurs-Collins T, Glanz K. *Food Insecurity, Neighborhood Food Environment, and Health Disparities: State of the Science, Research Gaps and Opportunities*. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. 2024;119(3):850–861. Available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10972712/>

⁹ Ohio Senate. *Senate Bill 233 (136th General Assembly): To create the Ohio Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force*.

¹⁰ Feeding America. *Map the Meal Gap 2025: Food Insecurity in Black Communities, Ohio (2023 data)*. Available at: <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/black/ohio>

¹¹ Feeding America. *Map the Meal Gap 2025: Food Insecurity in Ohio by Race/Ethnicity (White, Non-Hispanic and Hispanic Populations, 2023 data)*. Available at: <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/white/ohio>; <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/hispanic/ohio>

¹² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. *Food Insecurity and Black/African Americans*. Available at: <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/food-insecurity-and-blackafrican-americans>

¹³ Ohio Senate. *Senate Bill 233 (136th General Assembly): To create the Ohio Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force*.

