FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COMMISSIONERS HELPING TO MEET UNPRECEDENTED FOOD NEED IN CENTRAL OHIO

The Franklin County Commissioners this morning voted to approve a $2.5 million grant to the Mid-Ohio Food Collective to help that organization meet an unprecedented recent demand for food assistance. One and a half million dollars of the grant will be dedicated to direct food purchases by the Food Collective, and $1 million will be targeted to support the local food system infrastructure in Franklin County. The Mid-Ohio Food Collective works with a network of 680 partners and programs to provide more than 170,000 meals each day in Central and Eastern Ohio.

“To alleviate hunger, hundreds of thousands of our Franklin County families rely on food from the Mid-Ohio Food Collective,” said Board of Commissioners President Erica C. Crawley. “We are proud to provide vital resources to the collective in this time of unprecedented need.”

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic taxed all community service agencies even as many of them saw a decline in donations. As pandemic infections have slowed, however, demand for food assistance and other services has remained high and recent inflation and supply chain challenges have only made it harder to support families in need. As the costs of staple food items have increased, the Mid-Ohio Food Collective has seen a 15% increase in the number of families seeking its services so far this year. Those same higher costs have also taken their toll on agencies' budgets and have increasingly left the shelves bare at the Food Collective and its partner agencies.

“Local families are facing what feels like an unending series of challenges in recent years, from the pandemic to power outages, civil unrest, unemployment, inflation, and even uncertainty at school,” said Commissioner John O’Grady. “It is incumbent upon us to see that our weary neighbors have the resources they need to get by and the support they need to get ahead.”

Funding for this grant to the Mid-Ohio Food Collective is made possible by the American Rescue Plan (ARP), federal legislation that provides funding for local governments to help with their own communities’ pandemic recovery. In all, Franklin County will be receiving about $256 million in ARP funding, and the commissioners have created a website for residents to track how the money is being used in our community. A year ago, they used ARP funding to help the Food Collective expand its facility by adding 19,000 square feet of additional space, including a 14,000 square foot freezer and four new climate-controlled dock doors.

“No family can be successful if their basic needs aren’t met and no child can concentrate at school when they’re hungry,” said Commissioner Kevin L. Boyce. “Last year, almost 380,000 residents of Franklin County needed help to put food on their table; that’s nearly three out of every ten of our neighbors. No family should be hungry in our community, and for more than 40 years, the Mid-Ohio Food Collective has been on the front lines in that fight.”

In addition to the grant funding, representatives from the Mid-Ohio Food Collective this morning also received a ceremonial resolution from the commissioners designating September as Hunger Action Month in Franklin County. Hunger Action Month is recognized across the country every September by food
banks in the Feeding America Network. It is a campaign to raise awareness about food insecurity and inform community members about how they can get involved. This year, the Mid-Ohio Food Collective’s theme for Hunger Action Month is “It will take all of us” to end hunger.

“The Franklin County Commissioners are essential partners in our efforts to end hunger in Central Ohio,” said Matt Habash, President and CEO of Mid-Ohio Food Collective. “Their support is helping us connect families to food at a time when more Franklin County residents than ever are facing food insecurity. We are grateful for the county’s enduring partnership and continue to ask for the governor and state legislature to take urgent action to address record levels of hunger across Ohio.”

In recent years, the Franklin County Commissioners have provided more than $14 million in support to the Mid-Ohio Food Collective. To learn more or find out where your family can get nutritional support, visit MOFC.org.

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