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The Columbus Dispatch

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Food banks get a lift amid SNAP uncertainty



An employee transports produce at the Mid-Ohio Food Collective on July 29 in Grove City. Food banks are expecting a flood of demand if the federal government shutdown continues. SAMANTHA MADAR/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Columbus Foundation gives \$500K in grants to 21 facilities across region

Sophia Veneziano
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

As the central Ohio community prepares for the potential loss of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits Nov. 1, The Columbus Foundation announced a \$500,000 investment into 21 food banks across the region.

Food banks are expecting a flood of demand if the federal government shutdown continues. Roughly 1.3 million Ohioans could be left without monthly SNAP payments that help them purchase food starting Nov. 1. A federal program, SNAP provides low-income families with monthly benefits to afford groceries. In Ohio, roughly \$263.4 million is allocated each month to enrolled recipients. The average benefit is \$190 each month.

The foundation's Governing Committee approved the grants totaling \$500,000 on Oct. 27, five days before the anticipated loss of SNAP benefits.

Dan Sharpe, vice president for community research and grants management, said the foundation spent weeks tracking community needs before awarding the money. These needs include both that of the pantries, which have experienced an increase in demand alongside a decrease in available resources, and the community members who rely on their services.

The beneficiary organizations will receive the funds by the end of the week, Sharpe said.

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Volunteers from the Mauritanian Network for Human Rights in The US package fresh produce at the Mid-Ohio Food Collective's pop-up food pantry in the former Refugee Road Kroger in 2024. ADAM CAIRNS/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Council OKs \$25,000 for Mid-Ohio Food Collective

Jordan Laird
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

With federal food assistance set to run out at the end of this week for one in eight Franklin County residents, the Columbus City Council has allocated \$25,000 in emergency funding for the area's largest food collective.

The council approved the allocation as federal funds are set to dry up on Nov. 1 for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), often still known as food stamps, due to the ongoing federal government shutdown. Columbus City Council President Shannon Hardin acknowledged the city grant is just a drop in the bucket compared to the millions of dollars that normally aid over 100,000 city residents monthly, but he said council is hoping to inspire the community to take action.

"We find that unacceptable for this federal government not to do its job," Hardin said. "The city of Columbus will try to step in. We know it's only \$25,000 so it's not going to solve the issue, but hopefully be a catalyst to see what churches can do this weekend, what individual folks can do this weekend."

The council voted 8-0 with one absence to give the money to the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, the region and state's largest food pantry network. The council will also collect food donations at its next city council meeting on Nov. 3.

Nearly 180,000 people across Franklin County receive SNAP benefits. That includes nearly 85,000 children and about 16,000 seniors age 65 and older. More than \$30 million in SNAP benefits

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Judge rules THC drink sales can continue

Order blocking Ohio ban extended until Dec. 2

Haley BeMiller
State Bureau
USA TODAY NETWORK

Ohioans can buy THC drinks and hemp gummies at least through Thanksgiving.

Franklin County Common Pleas Court Judge Carl Aveni extended his order blocking Gov. Mike DeWine's ban on intoxicating hemp to Dec. 2. Aveni paused the executive order Oct. 14 after three businesses sued, saying DeWine overstepped his authority and caused chaos for hemp retailers.

The extension came days after the Ohio House passed legislation that would restrict the sale of intoxicating hemp – which doesn't include topicals – to licensed hemp dispensaries. It also allows stores and breweries to sell THC beverages for on-site consumption and carry-out.

The bill now heads to the Senate. House and Senate lawmakers will likely convene a special committee to hash out their differences on hemp and marijuana regulation.

"It's a brand new regulatory scheme for hemp relative to what we had been talking about," Senate President Rob McColley, R-Napoleon, said Oct. 22.

DeWine issued his executive order Oct. 8 to halt the sale of intoxicating hemp and THC drinks, forcing many businesses to clear their inventory before the lawsuit cropped up. DeWine contends products such as delta-8 THC – which remain unregulated – are harmful and too easy for children to

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Big names show support for city's \$1.9B bond package

Jordan Laird
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

The \$1.9 billion bond package proposed by Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther on the ballot this November is backed by some big names in the city with deep pockets.

The campaign's largest donors include two of the region's foremost real estate developers: The New Albany Co. and the Edwards Cos., which each contributed \$50,000. Dee and Jimmy Haslam, owners of the Columbus Crew, also donated \$50,000 between them.

The latest campaign finance report for Opportunity City PAC, which advocates for Columbus bond levies, shows the campaign has nearly \$600,000 in available funds as of Oct. 23. Fewer than 40 donors contributed to the campaign in 2025, and donations

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