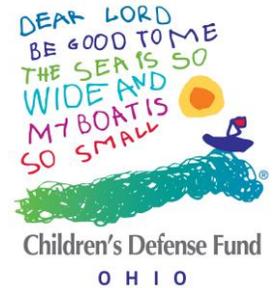


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Early Childhood Hunger: Many Ohio Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers are Hungry

Columbus, Ohio – Today, Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio released [Early Childhood Hunger Imperative](#), the first in a two-part series on hunger among young children in Ohio.

The early years of children’s lives—before they ever enter a classroom—create the blueprint for their future. During these years of major brain development, hunger and malnutrition have devastating effects on Ohio’s youngest children. Early childhood hunger can lead to physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and educational consequences.

“The research is clear: learning begins when a baby is born. Sadly, we find that the nutritional needs of many babies, toddlers, and preschoolers are not consistently met to support early learning,” said Renuka Mayadev, Executive Director of Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio. “While the school-age food supports of free and reduced price breakfast and lunch are critically important, waiting until hungry children are enrolled in school is too late.”

CDF-Ohio appreciates the [White House’s efforts](#) yesterday to host a conversation on child hunger in America, but these efforts are not enough, especially for children not yet in school. “Our elected officials must step up to the plate now, to ensure that young children do not go to bed hungry, especially when their brains are in the early stages of development,” said Ms. Mayadev.

Key Facts in the Report:

- 653,410—one in four—of Ohio’s children of all ages, including babies and toddlers, are food insecure.
- Food insecure young children face increased odds of negative health outcomes. They are as follows:
 - Nearly 2 times more likely to be in “fair or poor” health;
 - 2 times more likely to have behavioral problems;
 - Nearly 2 times more likely to be at risk for developmental delays;
 - 3 times more likely to have stomach aches;
 - 2.5 times more likely to have headaches; and
 - 1.5 times more likely to have colds.
- Poverty is at the root of hunger: More than a quarter of Ohio children under age six live in poverty (nearly 220,000).
- Racial Breakdown of Ohio Children under age six Living in Poverty:
 - Among Black children under age six, 55.5 percent are living in poverty;
 - Among Hispanic children under age six, 40.3 percent are living in poverty; and
 - Among White children under age six, 19.1 percent are living in poverty.
- 21 percent of homes with children under age six living in poverty in Ohio have at least one parent employed full-time
- 40 percent of hungry children suffer food insecurity for over a year.

Part Two of the series will provide potential solutions and recommendations highlighting the one federal program tasked exclusively with ensuring the health and nutrition of this age group in Ohio— the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

The Report [can be found here](#).

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The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.