Ohio Budget Letters to the Editor

February 8, 2021

**Earned Income Tax Credit:**

State budgets are moral documents. They set the priorities for our state and they should reflect our values. As a person of faith, I want to prioritize and lift up those who are struggling the most. With hunger in Ohio rising to 18.1% during the pandemic in Ohio, we have to make sure hardworking families have money to make ends meet. Right now, we have a tax break for a few people making over $100,000 that costs our state hundreds of millions of dollars. By limiting the LLC loophole to those earning $100,000 or less – instead of the current $250,000 – we could generate enough revenue in Ohio to invest in families with a refundable Earned Income Tax Credit. Many families in our congregation and community are struggling to pay their rent, light bill, and keep food on their table. These are some of the hardest working people I know. It is immoral that we allow lawyers making a quarter of a million dollars to pay no state income tax while a single mom working two jobs doesn’t get a break. This simple change will create equity in our communities and guarantee that more families have their daily bread.

**Hunger Investments:**

Investments into the Ohio Food Bank network is good for Ohio. These investments help hungry people access nutritious food, support Ohio farmers, and help local congregations do our part to provide safe and reliable food to our communities. Most of our congregations do not operate entirely on our own. Instead, we collaborate and coordinate with one of Ohio’s 12 Feeding America Food Banks. They support us in our mission and allow us access to food at bulk rates and also connect us with fresh fruit, vegetables, milk and other items that are costly for congregation members to donate. The Food bank handles the packaging and transportation of the fresh produce, because the last thing we want is our food to make a family sick! The state should increase funding for our food bank network to $45 million in this two-year budget so that all may be fed.

**Education**

As a person of faith, I want everyone to receive *their daily bread.* For that to become a reality, everyone will first need a strong education to be able to find a good paying job and navigate the difficult realities of this world. Sadly, Ohio’s education system is overly reliant on local property tax dollars and a child’s zip too often determines the quality of education they receive. To address this, we need Ohio’s legislature to include a school funding formula fix in this state budget. This will reduce the over-reliance on property tax dollars and focus on what children and communities need in their schools. The Cupp-Patterson framework received bi-partisan support in the last budget and we think it is a strong place to start. As people of faith, we cannot solve social issues by ourselves. We will step in and try to support and help when systems don’t work. We are over-extended and need the government to do their job, so that we can do ours.