
MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

ELECTION GUIDE 2020

WITH LOCAL MATTERS

This election season, join Local Matters in rallying for food justice issues. The lack of food access and education in our communities is not a partisan issue. Every candidate needs to understand the food-based challenges our neighbors face each day and how those challenges contribute to racial injustice. Candidates must have a plan to help end food disparities.

We encourage you to use this guide to hold candidates accountable and communicate their vision for our communities. Local Matters has outlined questions we believe all candidates should answer. You can help solicit responses and therefore bring greater transparency to candidates' platforms.

Questions can be asked during public candidate forums, through social media, and by calling or emailing the candidates' campaign teams (see page 2 of this election guide for more information).

After you ask candidates these questions, let us know! We would love to hear about your experience. You can tag us on social media (@localmattersorg) or reach us directly by emailing Sarah Miller, Communications & Advocacy Manager, at smiller@local-matters.org. Thank you for participating in the democratic process with us!

Question:

Diet-related chronic disease is a crisis that affects people across demographics, but disproportionately affects certain groups such as Black Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans. Many of our neighbors - kids and adults - suffer from poor nutrition. What policies will you change or stand behind to improve these conditions?

Question:

Over 1.5 million Ohioans rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) benefits to ensure there is food on the table. Over half a million of those Ohioans are children. What changes to SNAP or other benefits do you recommend that would enable Ohioans to have the resources needed to consistently put a meal on the table?

Question:

One shortcoming to SNAP benefits is the limitations on how and where SNAP dollars can be spent. How will you support building out the infrastructure needed to allow farmers and small retailers to accept online SNAP orders?

Question:

America is experiencing a job crisis. Many people are out of work and those still employed earn smaller and smaller shares of the output they generate. Poverty contributes to individuals' inability to access the food and healthcare they need. What innovative solutions to generate jobs and reduce wealth inequity will you work to enact?

W.E. R.I.S.E.

Communicating with candidates running for public office can feel intimidating. There are so many forms of communication, it is difficult to know what is best. The answer is almost always whichever form of communication feels most comfortable to you.

Whatever form of communication(s) you choose, be sure to let them know who you are and that you are planning to vote. Then, tell them about what food justice issue is most important to you. Still wondering how to reach out? Remember the acronym, WE RISE – it will help you figure out what to do.

Write

Write a postcard or letter to send to the candidate and their team (staffers could be your new best friends).

Events

Attend (virtual!) candidate nights and other events where they will be answering questions. Make sure to come prepared with your questions and be ready to jump when the opportunity to ask a question arises. Remember: it is best to be heard first and often. If your question is ignored, keep trying!

Research

Research information about the candidates. Knowing their background and what they stand for can help you frame questions in a more effective manner.

In-person – *virtually!*

If you miss public events but want to talk in person, try to schedule a meeting. It may help if you organize a group of voters in your district and schedule a meeting together.

Social Media

We all know Twitter can be used as a microphone. With that, social media can be the most direct and efficient way to connect with candidates. Tag them on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram. Their profiles should note if it is the candidate themselves responding or a representative for them.

Echo Effect

Your voice matters, but sometimes individual voices are less effective than a collective voice. Organize with your friends and neighbors to use the echo effect. If one of you asks a question that is not answered, another can echo the question. Eventually, it will be noticed.

Candidate Overview | Central Ohio

Check out your candidates' websites and Facebook pages for their latest news, or call their office if necessary. Other helpful resources are: [Franklin County Board of Elections](#); [Franklin County Democratic Party Events page](#); and [Franklin County Republican Party Events page](#).

Please note that only major party candidates are listed below. For a sample ballot with a full listing of candidates, please visit the [Franklin County Board of Elections website](#).

**denotes incumbent*

President of the United States

[Joe Biden](#), with Kamala Harris (D)

[Donald Trump](#), with Mike Pence (R)*

19th House District

[Meredith Freedhoff](#) (R)

[Mary Lightbody](#) (D)*

US House of Representatives

3rd Congressional District

[Joyce Beatty](#) (D)*

[Mark Richardson](#) (R)

20th House District

[Chris Baer](#) (R)

[Richard Brown](#) (D)*

12th Congressional District

[Troy Balderson](#) (R)*

[Alaina Shearer](#) (D)

21st House District

[Mehek Cooke](#) (R)

[Beth Liston](#) (D)*

15th Congressional District

[Joel Newby](#) (D)

[Steve Stivers](#) (R)*

22nd House District

[David Leland](#) (D)*

No opposing candidate

Ohio Senate

16th Senate District

[Stephanie Kunze](#) (R)*

[Crystal Lett](#) (D)

23rd House District

[Nancy Day-Achauer](#) (D)

[Laura Lanese](#) (R)*

Ohio House of Representatives

17th House District

[Tim Haske](#) (R)

[Adam Miller](#) (D)*

24th House District

[Pat Manley](#) (R)

[Allison Russo](#) (D)*

18th House District

[Kristin Boggs](#) (D)*

[Kayla Packard](#) (R)

25th House District

[Jim Burgess](#) (R)

[Dontavius Jarrells](#) (D)

26th House District

[Erica Crawley](#) (D)*

No opposing candidate

Candidate Responses

Local Matters has asked the Republican and Democratic candidates running for seats representing Central Ohio four questions about food justice issues affecting our community.

As candidates respond, Local Matters will update this document to include their answers. Please note that we have not at all altered the candidates' responses. Leading up to the election, we will continue to seek answers from other candidates.

Disclaimer: As a 501-c3 nonprofit organization, Local Matters does not endorse political candidates.

12th Congressional District

Alaina Shearer (D)

Question: Diet-related chronic disease is a crisis that affects people across demographics, but disproportionately affects certain groups such as Black Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans. Many of our neighbors - kids and adults - suffer from poor nutrition. What policies will you change or stand behind to improve these conditions?

Answer: "Diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease can all stem from a poor diet. Unfortunately, as mentioned, systemic barriers leading to unhealthy diets and food insecurity often disproportionately affect minority communities. We need policies that tackle food deserts and bolster already existing safety nets such as SNAP benefits."

Question: Over 1.5 million Ohioans rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) benefits to ensure there is food on the table. Over half a million of those Ohioans are children. What changes to SNAP or other benefits do you recommend that would enable Ohioans to have the resources needed to consistently put a meal on the table?

Answer: "SNAP benefits have been consistently shown to decrease the food insecurity of those who receive them. However, the main issue is that SNAP benefits do not go far enough. We must invest more in SNAP, and update regulations that limit SNAP benefits to low-income families."

Question: One shortcoming to SNAP benefits Local Matters sees is the limitations on how and where SNAP dollars can be spent. How will you support building out the

infrastructure needed to allow farmers and small retailers to accept online SNAP orders?

Answer: “The good news is that states are beginning to pilot online SNAP services via Amazon and Walmart. I would encourage these innovations and support the efforts that would allow small retailers to be able to accept SNAP orders.”

Question: America is experiencing a job crisis. Many people are out of work and those still employed earn smaller and smaller shares of the output they generate. Poverty contributes to individuals’ inability to access the food and healthcare they need. What innovative solutions to generate jobs and reduce wealth inequity will you work to enact?

Answer: “Climate change presents us with an incredible crisis, and yet an incredible opportunity to create millions of good-paying green jobs across Ohio and the country. In Congress, I would support an ambitious infrastructure plan to invigorate our economy and become more sustainable.”

15th Congressional District

Joel Newby (D)

Question: Diet-related chronic disease is a crisis that affects people across demographics, but disproportionately affects certain groups such as Black Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans. Many of our neighbors - kids and adults - suffer from poor nutrition. What policies will you change or stand behind to improve these conditions?

Answer: “We should support programs that aim to educate people on proper nutrition. Perhaps something to the “Got Milk?” or MyPlate programs. Influential people with large followings, like celebrities, could be invaluable in spreading the message. If we could recruit Beyoncé or Zendaya or anyone else with a significant following to promote eating fruits & vegetables and discussing the importance of moderation, that could improve nutrition greatly. We should also implement a policy that introduces a limit on the amount of added sweeteners, mostly focused on High Fructose Corn Syrup, can be added to a product. High Fructose Corn Syrup can lead to a higher risk for obesity, which is classified as a chronic disease and can lead to many other health issues in the long term.”

Question: Over 1.5 million Ohioans rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) benefits to ensure there is food on the table.

Over half a million of those Ohioans are children. What changes to SNAP or other benefits do you recommend that would enable Ohioans to have the resources needed to consistently put a meal on the table?

Answer: "A great recommendation would be to increase SNAP benefits across the board. This would increase food security. We should also consider the person's location when awarding benefits. Someone living in a high cost area would need more benefits to afford the same amount of food as someone living in a lower cost area, and the benefits should reflect that. Many recipients of SNAP lack time as well as money to prepare food, so increasing the benefits would give them the ability to buy prepackaged food when it is necessary. We should also increase benefits with inflation so recipients will be able to afford the same amount of food as they did the year before."

Question: One shortcoming to SNAP benefits Local Matters sees is the limitations on how and where SNAP dollars can be spent. How will you support building out the infrastructure needed to allow farmers and small retailers to accept online SNAP orders?

Answer: "Ohio, along with many other states, has recently added the ability for SNAP benefits to be used online. Currently only Amazon and Walmart have this ability in Ohio though. Other retailers should have this ability too. They would still have to abide by specific requirements but it's achievable."

Question: America is experiencing a job crisis. Many people are out of work and those still employed earn smaller and smaller shares of the output they generate. Poverty contributes to individuals' inability to access the food and healthcare they need. What innovative solutions to generate jobs and reduce wealth inequity will you work to enact?

Answer: "We will generate more jobs by supporting green energy and the jobs that will accompany that. Increasing the minimum wage will also greatly reduce wealth inequality. A minimum wage increase will raise wages for millions of people across the country. This would not only raise wages for those working in retail, it would raise the wages for many construction workers, educators, and health care workers. Repealing Trump's tax cuts for the wealthy will also greatly reduce the current wage inequality. Supporting broadband internet access will also increase access to jobs since so many things are online now."

Ohio's 16th Senate District

Stephanie Kunze (R)*

Question: Diet-related chronic disease is a crisis that affects people across demographics, but disproportionately affects certain groups such as Black Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans. Many of our neighbors - kids and adults - suffer from poor nutrition. What policies will you change or stand behind to improve these conditions?

Answer: "As a Chair of the Infant Mortality Commission and a member of the Commission on Minority Health, I understand the importance of ensuring all of Ohio's citizens have access to healthy food in their neighborhoods. I also have the opportunity to work on policy and fund programs that address the disparities disproportionately affecting certain groups in our state.

I have advocated for and supported state funding for the Mid-Ohio Foodbank and other foodbanks throughout the state to ensure increased access to healthy food is available no matter the zip code. One such initiative, the Mid-Ohio Market, combines the need for students at Columbus State Community College as well as the surrounding community, which is a hot spot zip code for infant mortality, to have increased access to fresh food. This is a transformational solution to providing access to groups disproportionately affected, suffering from poor nutrition. I will continue my advocacy and support of these programs throughout our state.

In addition, as State Senator, I have supported \$24.55 million per year to fund hunger relief to the Ohio Association of Food Banks to which the senate added an additional 5 Million dollars. I have voted for an additional \$500,000 for food banks unaffiliated with the Association of Food Banks, Children's Hunger Alliance in the amount of \$705,000 earmarked from TANF block grant for a total funding of \$1,175,000. I was also proud to be awarded the 2020 Children's Hunger Alliance Child Advocacy Award.

I also introduced SB121, the bipartisan "Health Education Standards" bill. Ohio is the only state in the country without health education standards in our K-12 system. My hope is that by encouraging age appropriate education of healthy lifestyles beginning in Kindergarten we will begin to make inroads in decreasing the number of diet-related chronic diseases as well as increase the overall health of Ohioans."

Question: Over 1.5 million Ohioans rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) benefits to ensure there is food on the table. Over half a million of those Ohioans are children. What changes to SNAP or other benefits do you recommend that would enable Ohioans to have the resources needed to consistently put a meal on the table?

Answer: “Although SNAP is a federal program, as State Senator I have supported the following:

JFS-SNAP Funding-Food Assistance Programs:

2020-\$165,544,356 (14.2% increase)

2021-\$165,544,356

April, 2020

\$9.5 million over 2 years for emergency food distribution

\$20 million over 2 years for SNAP assistance

\$25 million for federal Summer Food Service Program-funds used to support school lunch programs to make sure children receive regular meals they may miss due to COVID.

National Guard Support to staff Food Banks during pandemic.”

Question: One shortcoming to SNAP benefits Local Matters sees is the limitations on how and where SNAP dollars can be spent. How will you support building out the infrastructure needed to allow farmers and small retailers to accept online SNAP orders?

Answer: “I suppose efforts to minimize stigma to allow for SNAP beneficiaries to have the same experience as other consumers accessing food and support maximizing participation among diverse retailers. SNAP benefit delivery technology should be cost neutral for retailers. I also support new technology such as online, mobile apps and other ways to make it easier for beneficiaries to access healthy food.”

Question: America is experiencing a job crisis. Many people are out of work and those still employed earn smaller and smaller shares of the output they generate. Poverty contributes to individuals’ inability to access the food and healthcare they need. What innovative solutions to generate jobs and reduce wealth inequity will you work to enact?

Answer: “As a member of the Governor’s Workforce Transformation Board, I support increasing accreditation certificates and other ways to upscale skills for Ohioans to gain access to employment that will support their families. I have also supported community gardens, with individuals in food desserts also serving as employees to work in the garden. I have also supported the “Ohio To Work” program making it easier for workers to connect to in-demand jobs, or to the training that will qualify them for an in-demand job. This is an innovative, holistic approach and not a short-term job solution but a sustainable career with long-term job opportunities. “Ohio To Work” will enhance existing resources, linking workers to jobs through talent evaluation tools and coaching, providing displaced workers with a mix of accelerated training and job

exploration supported by innovative financing in collaboration with leading employers, training providers, and nonprofits.”

Crystal Lett (D)

Question: Diet-related chronic disease is a crisis that affects people across demographics, but disproportionately affects certain groups such as Black Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans. Many of our neighbors - kids and adults - suffer from poor nutrition. What policies will you change or stand behind to improve these conditions?

Answer: “The disproportionate impact of poverty, disease, education, and many other issues on minority communities is largely due to the lasting impacts of systemic racism in our society. I believe that to address this, we must start by acknowledging that racism is a public health crisis. Unfortunately, my opponent, Stephanie Kunze, has still not signed on to the Senate Resolution to show her support of that belief. Additionally, we must actively work to ensure that quality, affordable food options are available in high-population minority areas. The ubiquity of food deserts makes quality diets hard to access and harms minority communities greatly.”

Question: Over 1.5 million Ohioans rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) benefits to ensure there is food on the table. Over half a million of those Ohioans are children. What changes to SNAP or other benefits do you recommend that would enable Ohioans to have the resources needed to consistently put a meal on the table?

Answer: “The SNAP program is an incredible program for Ohioans in need, but it has a lot of room for improvement. For a working family of 4 earning just \$650/month more than the federal poverty level causes them to lose all of their food assistance. The goal of SNAP is supposed to be helping families back onto their feet after difficult times. In reality, this all-or-nothing system only keeps people down. SNAP must be reformed to gradually reduce benefits as families get back on their feet rather than stripping the benefits away the second their income exceeds the cap. No child should go hungry in the state of Ohio.”

Question: One shortcoming to SNAP benefits Local Matters sees is the limitations on how and where SNAP dollars can be spent. How will you support building out the infrastructure needed to allow farmers and small retailers to accept online SNAP orders?

Answer: “We need to expand the options available for SNAP beneficiaries to access quality food in a more reasonably convenient manner. I fully support the legislation recently introduced by US Senators Durbin and Duckworth to Implement and Expand Online SNAP Purchasing Nationwide. I would be interested in exploring similar policies at the State level and working with advocacy organizations and small businesses to expand the options in Ohio for SNAP purchasing.”

Question: America is experiencing a job crisis. Many people are out of work and those still employed earn smaller and smaller shares of the output they generate. Poverty contributes to individuals’ inability to access the food and healthcare they need. What innovative solutions to generate jobs and reduce wealth inequity will you work to enact?

Answer: “Wealth inequality has gotten worse every single year - by design. Wages have decreased when adjusting for inflation. Cost of living has skyrocketed. The cost of healthcare and college tuition are at all time highs. The middle class in Ohio is eroding away. We must raise the minimum wage. We must decouple healthcare from employment and give Ohioans a transparent way to choose the best plan for them. It is imperative that we defend collective bargaining rights and expand union membership to save Ohio’s middle class.”

Ohio’s 22nd House District

David Leland (D)*

Question: Diet-related chronic disease is a crisis that affects people across demographics, but disproportionately affects certain groups such as Black Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans. Many of our neighbors - kids and adults - suffer from poor nutrition. What policies will you change or stand behind to improve these conditions?

Answer: “I support policies to reduce the number of food deserts in Ohio, which often lead to predictable health outcomes for low-income Ohioans who have fewer choices about where they can purchase food. When unhealthy options are the only options, or are far more convenient, unhealthy options become the options of choice. We know that sugary drinks and fast food contribute to many chronic illnesses, so it should be our goal to eliminate the conditions that make those the only choices.

Additionally, I support legislation like the House Bill 165, which would force Ohio to adopt the most recent health education standards developed by the American

Association for Health Education, and legislation like House Bill 360, which requires schools to have water fountains for children to access.”

Question: Over 1.5 million Ohioans rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) benefits to ensure there is food on the table. Over half a million of those Ohioans are children. What changes to SNAP or other benefits do you recommend that would enable Ohioans to have the resources needed to consistently put a meal on the table?

Answer: “SNAP is an essential program to thousands of Ohioans, allowing them to access necessary items for their nutrition. However, many Ohioans face avoidable burdens in procuring SNAP benefits. Ohio should expand eligibility to SNAP to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), rather than the 130 percent FPL level currently set was the cap for those eligible. This is especially important now, as many Ohioans, particularly those in the service sector, are experiencing fewer work hours due to COVID-19.

Additionally, the process for initially receiving SNAP can be extremely onerous. I believe we should make it easier to access these benefits - when benefits are harder to access, fewer people use them, and they also can't provide temporary boosts when tough times hit families quickly, as we've experienced during recent months. Particularly with SNAP benefits, a lack of accessibility simply keeps money out of local economies. We've seen some steps in the right direction, including granting greater flexibility around the interview requirements, but there's more work to be done.

Finally, I will fight against unnecessary attempts to harm the SNAP program. Ideas like requiring photo IDs to go on SNAP cards are simply unnecessary, and would only serve to make these benefits more costly and harder to allocate.”

Question: One shortcoming to SNAP benefits Local Matters sees is the limitations on how and where SNAP dollars can be spent. How will you support building out the infrastructure needed to allow farmers and small retailers to accept online SNAP orders?

Answer: “Although I think the majority of the work needed to ensure greater flexibility around where SNAP recipients can use their benefits must happen at the federal level, I would very much like to see SNAP benefits increase the flow of money to local food producers. I will support any efforts on the state level to build out an infrastructure to benefit SNAP recipients and local food producers.”

Question: America is experiencing a job crisis. Many people are out of work and those still employed earn smaller and smaller shares of the output they generate. Poverty

contributes to individuals' inability to access the food and healthcare they need. What innovative solutions to generate jobs and reduce wealth inequity will you work to enact?

Answer: "Since the start of the pandemic, American billionaires have increased their wealth by nearly 30 percent. On the other hand, low income Ohioans have been hit the very hardest, with those in service sector jobs being disproportionately affected.

The pandemic hasn't hurt business equally either - pizza places and grocery stores have been doing well, while dine-in restaurants and brick-and-mortar retail stores have suffered catastrophic losses. With that in mind, I believe temporary solutions should revolve around keeping Ohioans afloat, and giving them greater flexibility while they search for jobs that provide ample benefits and pay. Unemployment benefits, even at their usual rate, should give recipients the ability to spend time looking for the right job, rather than taking any available employment. I've publicly asked that unemployment benefits be maintained at the enhanced level they the CARES Act provided. I've also worked with JFS to ensure unemployment benefits were provided to those at increased risk of COVID-19, and to make sure that those who've fallen through the cracks, either because they didn't know of their eligibility or for other reasons might still receive benefits.

Additionally, Ohio should grant rent relief to low income families who've suffered wage disruptions due to the pandemic. We're faced with an eviction crisis unlike any other in this state's history. That's why I proposed the Eviction Crisis Response Act, which would put \$270 million from the state's rainy-day fund toward immediate and flexible rent relief programs. Without these measures, wealth inequality is going to explode as the number of Ohioans in poverty balloons.

Finally, the most important thing Ohio can do to ensure there are adequate jobs in the future is to get the Coronavirus crisis under control. To do that we must rely on Science to take us on the right path."

Ohio's 23rd House District

Laura Lanese (R)*

"We need to get healthy offerings to individuals who need it. When we first developed food assistance programs the goal was to feed as many people as possible. Our goal has now changed to feed as many people as healthfully as possible. Programs like Produce Perks, which I supported in the operating budget and will continue to support is one way to address this issue. Recipients can double their purchasing power by

buying healthy produce. Another program allows individuals to utilize their SNAP benefits at farmers' markets. I see this at our local Prairie Township farmers' market. Finally, while the pandemic shutdown has greatly hurt our businesses, I have signed on and voted for several bills to restart our economy like easing restrictions on for businesses. I have also worked with our minority business community to help grow various companies within my district."

Nancy Day-Achauer (D)

Question: Diet-related chronic disease is a crisis that affects people across demographics, but disproportionately affects certain groups such as Black Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans. Many of our neighbors - kids and adults - suffer from poor nutrition. What policies will you change or stand behind to improve these conditions?

Answer: "I will support policies that 1) use economic development tools to support opening minority owned local grocery stores and grocery stores opening in food deserts, 2) develop and strengthen local farmers markets in high need communities, 3) create/expand community gardens, and 4) create/expand supported food distributions (e.g. Mid-Ohio Markets, All People's Market, etc.)"

Question: Over 1.5 million Ohioans rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) benefits to ensure there is food on the table. Over half a million of those Ohioans are children. What changes to SNAP or other benefits do you recommend that would enable Ohioans to have the resources needed to consistently put a meal on the table?

Answer: "Expand food eligibility to include some prepared foods (e.g. rotisserie chicken). Not everyone lives in a place with an oven or cooking utensils; therefore, allowing the purchase of prepared foods can fill the gap.

Provide additional benefits to cover non-food items such as personal hygiene items and over the counter medications. This would give families more spendable income for additional groceries."

Question: One shortcoming to SNAP benefits Local Matters sees is the limitations on how and where SNAP dollars can be spent. How will you support building out the infrastructure needed to allow farmers and small retailers to accept online SNAP orders?

Answer: "I will support providing grants to farmers and small retailers to cover the setup costs of the hardware and software needed to accept online SNAP orders."

Question: America is experiencing a job crisis. Many people are out of work and those still employed earn smaller and smaller shares of the output they generate. Poverty contributes to individuals' inability to access the food and healthcare they need. What innovative solutions to generate jobs and reduce wealth inequity will you work to enact?

Answer: "Generating jobs is insufficient for addressing unemployment and underemployment. We must address critical issues that impact a person's ability to work; in particular, transportation education/training, the benefits cliff and childcare.

We need to create a multi-modal transportation system so people can get to good paying jobs. Too many people are trapped in low wage jobs because they lack the reliable transportation necessary to commute to higher wage jobs.

We need to promote vocational training in our high schools and community colleges, which is less expensive than a college degree, so people can gain in-demand skills without acquiring excessive debt. Additionally, we need to make people aware of the paid apprenticeships available through unions enabling people to earn a good wage while they learn a trade.

We need to eliminate the benefits gap which prevents people from accepting higher wage jobs because the pay is insufficient to cover the cost of lost benefits. Creating a benefits transition program that is scaled to a person's wages will enable them to transition off of government provided benefits thereby freeing them up to accept better employment.

People with children need quality affordable childcare in order to work. The Step Up to Quality program resulted in the closure of many centers because ODJFS funding was insufficient to cover the cost. Ohio needs to provide adequate funding for centers to operate so parents can go to work.

Addressing these issues will enable people to work at higher paying jobs that are available now."

Ohio's 24th House District

Allison Russo (D)*

Question: Diet-related chronic disease is a crisis that affects people across demographics, but disproportionately affects certain groups such as Black Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans. Many of our neighbors - kids and adults - suffer from poor nutrition. What policies will you change or stand behind to improve these conditions?

Answer: "I believe Ohio needs k-12 health education standards that are evidence-based and include nutrition education. We are still the only state in the country without these standards, and comprehensive nutrition education is a key element in decreasing the rate of chronic diet-related disease in the next generation. I am proud to be a co-sponsor of House Bill 165 that requires the State Board of Education to adopt either the most recent health education standards developed by the American Association for Health Education, or health education standards developed and prescribed by the State Board itself."

Question: Over 1.5 million Ohioans rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) benefits to ensure there is food on the table. Over half a million of those Ohioans are children. What changes to SNAP or other benefits do you recommend that would enable Ohioans to have the resources needed to consistently put a meal on the table?

Answer: "First and foremost, I believe many of the waivers that have been put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic should be extended. For example, allowing online purchasing of food with EBT cards and transferring EBT benefits to families when children are not in school and unable to receive free- and reduced-price meals. I also believe it is incredibly important that we pause the implementation of the Medicaid work requirements due to its significant impact on ABAWD waivers, which will mean more families and children will not have critical SNAP benefits."

Question: One shortcoming to SNAP benefits Local Matters sees is the limitations on how and where SNAP dollars can be spent. How will you support building out the infrastructure needed to allow farmers and small retailers to accept online SNAP orders?

Answer: "Farmers and small businesses are critical to our economic recovery, and I think a smart investment of state budget dollars is to fund and require ODJFS to implement the technology needed to expand the number of businesses, especially our local small businesses, able to accept these payments. This also has the added benefit of expanding access to fresh and nutritious food in many areas of the state that may be underserved by large retailers."

Question: America is experiencing a job crisis. Many people are out of work and those still employed earn smaller and smaller shares of the output they generate. Poverty contributes to individuals' inability to access the food and healthcare they need. What innovative solutions to generate jobs and reduce wealth inequity will you work to enact?

Answer: "I have consistently supported policies that expand job training programs, increase the minimum wage, and lower taxes for Ohio's middle-class and low-income families. I also believe it is critically important that any national or state COVID-19 economic recovery plan addresses those workers and industries hardest hit by this pandemic – women, service industries, low-wage workers who can't pivot to WFH, childcare centers and workers, school employees, and health care providers. This is not the Great Recession of 2007-2009, and our recovery response needs to reflect the assistance and job training these workers actually need to build back their lives and economic stability."