Members of the Ohio Senate
Ohio Statehouse
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Senator:

On behalf of Ohio's businesses, grocers, retailers, wholesalers, farmers and food and beverage producers, **we oppose Senate Bill 161, and any efforts to include SNAP purchase restriction language in Substitute HB 96.** While cost-cutting and public health are laudable goals, this language will not make Ohioans healthier or save even one dollar in taxpayer spending. It will, however, expand government, add burdensome regulations to our retailers and harm our food and beverage producers and suppliers.

Cutting certain products like soda, candy, chips or ice cream from SNAP won't save any SNAP costs because restrictions don't reduce the program's total cost, only what can be bought with those dollars. Additionally, if Ohio has its own waiver program, it will need to set up and administer a program that differs from the Federal guidelines. It may seem simple to ban a few items, but **it will take a bigger Ohio government and more regulations to create a food code of "good" and "bad" items.** Bureaucrats will examine more than 600,000 products in the marketplace to create their food code. Who is paying for that? We all applauded Ohio's continuing pledge to cut administrative red tape. This would completely undermine that effort.

Should Ohio head down this slippery slope with sales restrictions on these items, what will be next? Limiting red meat purchases? Banning white bread? No whole milk, only almond milk? Is it really the place of state government to become the "food police"?

Aside from growing government, **restrictions would overly burden retailers**. Ohio's grocery stores, convenience stores and farmers' markets would face complicated compliance costs such as updating point of sale systems, employee training, and record-keeping to name a few. Retailers would lose employees because of the conflicts that these restrictions would create with SNAP customers at checkout. Smaller retailers in rural and low-income areas that rely on SNAP sales would be forced to navigate new regulations that could threaten their businesses. Again, this harm to retailers would not save even $1 in SNAP funds.

When state dollars are tight, we believe resources are better spent on continuing public-private incentives like Produce Perks that give SNAP recipients access to more fresh fruits and vegetables. Programs like SNAP-Ed help recipients stretch their dollars and find tasty ways to make nutritious meals. Ohio has had success with these programs, which benefit shoppers and farmers.

We champion free market solutions, like offering consumers more product choices and providing clear product information that empowers them to make their own decisions. This approach is a way to encourage better choices, rather than wielding the heavy hand of government upon families and veterans seeking temporary help.

Finally, **the negative impact of SNAP restrictions will be felt along the food supply chain** from farmers growing corn and soybeans, to food and beverage producers, to retailers, all operating in every corner of Ohio**.** There are over **12,000 jobs in Ohio's non-alcoholic beverage** industry alone, and **thousands more jobs in businesses producing snacks, confections and other products** in towns across Ohio. The **retail industry provides one in every four jobs** in Ohio, more than any other industry in the state. And **food and agriculture is Ohio's number one industry,** adding **$124 billion** to our economy each year.

The General Assembly works hard to make Ohio attractive to new employers and encourage investment from our farmers, food and beverage producers and retailers. Any purchase restriction language sends a negative message about doing business in Ohio—and will accomplish neither cost-savings nor better health outcomes.

We strongly urge you and your fellow members to **keep any SNAP purchase restriction language out of Sub HB 96**. By doing so, you will confirm your continued support for our members working throughout Ohio. Thank you for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

Ohio Bakers Association
Ohio Beverage Association
Ohio Business Roundtable
Can Manufacturers Institute
Ohio Chamber of Commerce
Ohio Council of Retail Merchants
Ohio Dairy Producers Association
The Ohio Energy & Convenience Association
The Food Industry Association
Ohio Grocers Association
Ohio Manufacturers Association
Ohio Association of Wholesaler-Distributors
Ohio Wholesale Marketers Association
National Confectioners Association
SNAC International