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## News Release

At a time when Ohio residents are already hurting, state leaders are planning to make even deeper cuts to the budgets of programs and services in place to help people living in poverty. We already do not provide enough assistance to help our neighbors meet their basic needs, and now we are making additional cuts in order to pay for tax cuts that benefit the rich.

Here are a few comments from Athens County residents, discussing the challenges they are currently facing in their lives.

**"I am working as much as I can at my current job and I am still looking for another.** There are very few out there and they are hard to find. I don't make nearly enough to pay for rent, utilities and gas for our car, not to mention car repairs and other unexpected expenses. My fiancé got hurt at work and was denied for disability so I support our family of four. And even though he has serious health issues, he is still trying to find a job because we have no choice and yet it is a struggle to find one. We put forth our best effort and can never get ahead. We don't want to be on welfare but with the economy and the lack of jobs, we have no choice."

**"I am pregnant and need medical help.** I have a four-year-old daughter who needs medical as well. My husband was just laid off from his job and we need help paying our bills and feeding our family. We have no income now and it's been hard trying to find another job. We struggle to keep our vehicle and have gas to go to the doctor and for my husband to go apply for jobs. It is a really hard time."

**"I get food stamps and I work full time,** but even working and getting assistance, it's still hard to feed three people and pay bills."

**"I just left the food bank today, with a heavy heart and an empty gas tank.** I chose the option of going without lunch for the last three days. Every month the food stamps run out and leave empty stomachs of children and adults all over Ohio. Food banks have become a staple, not just for emergencies."

**“My husband and I are over 50 and lost our jobs at the university 10 years ago.** We've tried our own businesses, but they have failed leaving us in debt. We find ourselves overqualified and too old to be employable in the Athens area. One job cited the cost of health insurance in laying off my husband. Medically, I suffer from clinical depression and hypothyroidism. I don't know where my medications will come from if I can't pay for them. I can't afford to get myself healthy. We are without heat, except for a small wood stove and live at 50 degrees. We don't know what we will do when unemployment benefits run out as we are already unable to pay for basic needs.”

**“I lost my job in December.** My gas, electric and water will soon be shut off due to non payment. I am struggling to buy food. I have two children. My husband does work, but we cannot make it alone on his income. I have been looking for work for a month to no avail. We need temporary help till I can find work.”

**“I am 55 years old with two kids.** I am back to school getting my degree to help me with a good paying job. My wife worked for a company as a production manager, but the company was sold and moved up near Toledo. So the help we get until I finish school is critical.”

**“Well, first-off I am a recovering addict and receive medicine to take care of my problem.** I have no medical or prescription coverage, so it's costing me about \$400 a month. I also pay a total of \$400 a month in child support. I am employed and my paychecks average around \$15 -\$20 a week after taxes and child support. I do receive \$200 in food stamps, but I'm still struggling to live. I'm trying to do well with my recovery, but it's so hard when I can't even afford gas to get to work. It makes no sense that people who work and try to do well can't receive any help. If I could get medical coverage it would make a world of difference. I have teeth breaking off and I can't afford a dentist. I get so upset that I work 30-40 hours a week and still have to borrow money to get there.”

**“I need surgery for several things.** My water lines broke and my husband left me, so now all I will have is \$577 a month.”

**“We are a family of four.** We have two young children. My boyfriend is the only one working so that I can care for our children. He only makes \$8 an hour and we struggle to pay our bills and buy needed personal supplies and things for our children.”

**“My husband previously got laid off of work and is seeking full-time employment still, and I have been unable to work due to my Multiple Sclerosis, which gives me occasional blackouts and weak muscles.** We have two small children who need childcare and my daughter goes to preschool Monday through Friday. Due to current expenses and gas prices, we had to sell our vehicle and now transportation for the four of us has become stressful. My MS caused me to lose the vision in my right eye and I have a lost a lot of muscle control in my back, legs and arms. Hospital visits are complicated due to my doctor being in Columbus and arranging daycare for my little ones. Good help is hard to find and the more support and people that help each other makes life a blessing.”