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For Immediate Release

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### **Butler County to host two Conversations on Poverty**

Butler County residents have two opportunities to help shape Governor Ted Strickland's strategy to combat poverty in Ohio.

On behalf of the governor's Anti-Poverty Task force, a Butler County Planning Committee of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies will hold two Conversations on Poverty in February to gain a variety of perspectives on reducing the percentage of Ohioans who live in poverty today.

The first Conversation on Poverty will take place Tuesday, February 3 from 6-8 p.m. at the Middletown Community Center on Lafayette Street, and the second session is scheduled Tuesday, February 10 from 6-8 p.m. at First St. John United Church of Christ, 412 South Front Street in Hamilton. Butler County is among 22 sites chosen by the governor's office to host the community forums.

"Our goal is to hold small group discussions involving three to five individuals so everyone's viewpoint can be heard on ways we can reduce poverty," said Jeffrey Diver, Executive Director of SELF, Supports to Encourage Low-income Families.

"We want to hear from clients who use our network of social services in Butler County, as well as social service professionals, public officials, volunteers and our business community, which also needs to be part of the discussion."

The deadline to register for Butler County's two Conversations on Poverty is Friday, January 30. People can sign up for either the Middletown or Hamilton forum by calling Butler County 2-1-1 from their landline phone or by calling (513) 785-3085 from their cell phone. A light meal will be served at the beginning of each forum.

Participants will respond to five questions about how to reduce poverty in Ohio. To ensure better diversity of responses, people will be in a different group for each 20-minute discussion of a question.

“By the end of the evening, we plan to come together to build a consensus on two major things we think the governor could do to help us fight poverty in Butler County,” said Tina Osso, Executive Director of Shared Harvest Foodbank. “Our suggestions and those of the participants in the 21 other regional forums will be shared with Governor Strickland’s Anti-Poverty Task Force in late February.”

The Butler County Planning Committee includes representatives from SELF, Shared Harvest Foodbank, Butler County Educational Service Center, Butler County Department of Job and Family Services, Hamilton City Council and First St. John United Church of Christ.