Candidate Guide for Central Ohio
Fall 2018 Election

This election season, join Local Matters in rallying for food and health-related issues. A lack of food education and access in our communities is not a partisan issue – every candidate needs to understand the challenges our neighbors face each day and have a plan to help end these problems.

Local Matters has asked the Republican and Democratic candidates running for seats representing Central Ohio four questions about food and health 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. Local Matters has reached out to candidates about food and health-related issues with the goal of being able to educate voters about where candidates stand regarding these issues.

Question: Diet-related chronic disease is a crisis that affects people across all demographics. Many of our neighbors - kids and adults - suffer from poor nutrition. What policies will you change or stand behind to help improve these conditions?

Response from Cordray/Sutton for Ohio
Ohioans often lack the time and resources they need to cook at home and maintain active lifestyles, but it is particularly acute in those who facing socio-economic challenges. For example, the time and energy taken up by multiple jobs and getting children to and from school, after school care, and often care for aging parents can make it a struggle for lower income families to attain a healthy diet.

In order to increase access, knowledge, and use of healthy foods, we need to meet families where they are. Over 28 percent of children aged 2-5 in Ohio who were enrolled in the WIC program in 2014 were overweight or obese. Child care and early education centers want to support the whole child, preparing them to succeed in school and lead healthy lives. There are many programs designed to help with both education and attainment of healthy food, but the state has not made a concerted effort to align all these worthy programs and organizations under one vision. We will pull together stakeholders to create a vision that make it easier for families to access and cook with healthy foods. We will stand behind programs that promote healthy habits early on, such as the training done by Ohio Healthy Programs. Investing in prevention can save Ohio billions in health care and lost productivity costs, and will set our youngest on the path to a healthier and happier life.
**Question:** As grocery stores leave our inner-city neighborhoods, they also leave thousands of people without convenient access to nutritious foods. What are some strategies you envision will help solve this issue?

*Response from Cordray/Sutton for Ohio*
Research shows that food deserts are most likely to be found in disadvantaged neighborhoods. For many, owning and maintaining a car is cost prohibitive. We need to ensure that quality public transit is available in neighborhoods that connect Ohioans directly with groceries and other services that they need. Twenty-seven counties currently do not have any public transit. We will address the structural discrimination that leads to inequities in the quality and efficiency of mass transit services throughout Ohio. Limiting transit service to commuters during normal working hours leaves families in need behind. Eliminating structural discrimination will make living healthier lives easier for everyone.

We will support other innovative ideas that bring healthy foods closer to our families. Healthy living should be convenient. We will explore ways to extend state assistance programs further into farmers’ markets and mobile grocery services. We will support food prescription programs, increasing access to fresh food and addressing diet-related chronic diseases all together.

**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. Nearly 700,000 of them are children. Do you plan to support and enhance federal funding for SNAP?

*Response from Cordray/Sutton for Ohio*
We must support and enhance federal funding for SNAP. Recent moves by the U.S. House of Representatives to undermine SNAP in its version of the Farm bill have been disheartening. Imposing additional requirements will undermine our efforts to reduce hunger. At a time when Americans are struggling with stagnant wages and stable jobs, we should be increasing our support for nutrition programs, not undermining them.

**Question:** While recent data shows that the country’s job crisis is abating, workers continue to 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 reduce wealth inequality will you work to enact?

*Response from Cordray/Sutton for Ohio*
It used to be that in America, if you worked hard and played by the rules, you would get ahead in life. The share of the wealth held by the top 1/10th of 1 percent has tripled over the past 30 years, while millions of Americans saw the floor fall out from below them during the financial crisis. Home ownership was ruined for many, including in communities of color. Moreover, Americans still have inequitable access to financial services. Approximately 9 million households lack a bank account. Nearly half of American households lack a financial safety net.
Increasing the minimum wage is an important and necessary step that can provide support for Ohio families in the short term. Ohioans deserve it, and it is the right thing to do. There is a lot more that must be done over the long term. We need to incentivize savings and make it easier for Ohioans to access affordable credit. We need to connect lower-income Ohioans to the financial services and guidance they need. We need to protect our pension systems in Ohio, keeping the hard earned money of police officers, firefighters, and other public servants here. We need to support Ohio’s small businesses to ensure they can provide quality retirement programs to our workforce.