

# NEWS RELEASE

**Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**June 28, 2021**

**Contact:** Greta Johnson  
Director of Communications & Assistant Chief of Staff  
Office of Executive Shapiro  
[gjohnson@summitoh.net](mailto:gjohnson@summitoh.net)  
330-643-2656

## **County Executive targets community investment with federal funds**

**SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO**—Following County Council approval, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro recently made a direct investment of over \$2 million in federal funds in to the community. Working with local partners, the Executive’s Office is providing laptops and wireless internet hotspots to low-income families, creating a diaper bank for families in need, funding home improvements for eligible residents and assisting individuals with attaining and maintaining employment while experiencing rapid public assistance benefits reductions, known as the “benefits cliff”.

Recognizing the growing “digital divide” experienced by low-income families in Summit County, Executive Shapiro’s Department of Job and Family Services (DJFS) is purchasing 500 laptops and facilitating T-Mobile wireless hotspot internet connectivity for TANF eligible residents. Progressive Alliance Community Development Corporation (PACDC), based in West Akron, will coordinate laptop and hotspot distribution and technical support. PACDC is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization that advocates for families and healthy communities, and provides economic development, affordable housing and wellness services. By providing improved digital access, families are better able to search and apply for jobs, participate in virtual educational opportunities and connect with healthcare providers.

“The pandemic heightened the already growing digital divide in Summit County and the entire nation. As workers and students headed home from their offices and classrooms, we saw the inequity in digital access and the disadvantages it created,” said Executive Shapiro. “Providing laptops and hotspots to families in need will help them overcome these disadvantages and create meaningful opportunities for children and parents.”

To further assist TANF eligible families, DJFS is providing a grant to the Akron Urban League (AUL) to provide employment preparedness/placement and benefits cliff support services. The benefits cliff refers to the decrease in public benefits, like SNAP, Medicaid and childcare, that occurs due to minor increases in household earnings. This loss of benefits can out pace a wage increase, serving as a disincentive to work or career advancement. To help prevent this, participants in the AUL program will receive support to transition to employment via an intensive case management model. This model includes job readiness training, career assessment, job training/certification, financial literacy/budgeting, barrier removal support services (such as referral services, transportation, child care, work uniforms/tools/supplies),

employer engagement, job placement, job coaching/mentoring and up to 18 months of job retention monitoring.

In partnership with Summit County Public Health (SCPH) and Full Term First Birthday, DJFS is creating a countywide diaper bank for TANF eligible families. With \$75,000 of TANF funds, the partners will coordinate distribution of diapers, wipes and pull-ups for families in need. They will also distribute diapers, child safety items, parenting essentials and related information at community resource fairs in Summit County for pregnant women and parents.

Executive Shapiro's Department of Community and Economic Development is set to receive \$1.4 million from the U.S. Department of Energy and Department of Health and Human Services for the Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP). These funds will help provide necessary home improvements including new furnaces, hot water tanks and insulation to low income residents of Summit County. The County expects to complete a minimum of 131 home improvements with these funds this year.

"People need help now more than ever," said Executive Shapiro. "Since the pandemic began, we have been listening to the needs of our residents and doing our best to provide support. These investments represent Summit County's commitment to helping all people move forward to better circumstances and opportunities."

To apply for TANF assistance, please visit <https://www.summitdjfs.org/resources/apply-over-the-phone.html>

To apply for HWAP assistance, please visit <https://co.summitoh.net/pages/HWAP.html>