

# Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger *Update*



Commonwealth of Virginia  
2021

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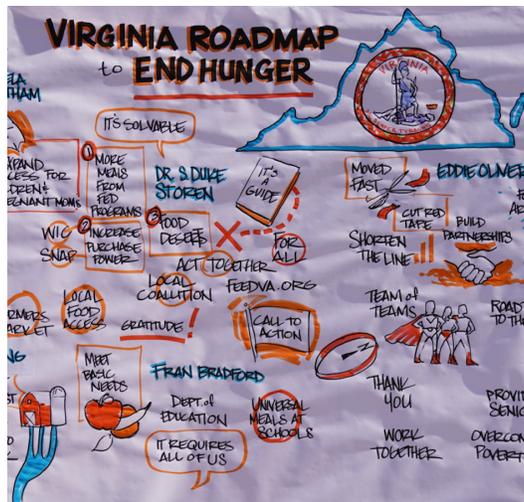


# 2021 ROADMAP TO END HUNGER UPDATE

In October 2020, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam released the 'Roadmap to End Hunger,' a comprehensive agenda to alleviate food insecurity in the Commonwealth. One year later, we document the economic impact and federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic, recognize the successes which have advanced our Roadmap strategies, and outline the path forward to eliminating food insecurity in Virginia.

## Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Food Security in Virginia

- Virginia Tech Food Insecurity Study
  - » In December 2020, 81.2% of adults receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits reported being food insecure, compared to 59.3% in April 2020, suggesting that SNAP benefits simply were not enough to offset the drastic negative economic impacts of COVID-19.
- Feeding America estimates that the pandemic resulted in 150,000 more food-insecure Virginians
  - » Up from 799,600 in 2019 (including 214,200 children)
- Over the past year, Virginia food bank distributions increased 30%, amounting to approximately 170 million pounds of food.
- An April 2021 survey of the Virginia Community College System found that 32% of students reported being food insecure in the previous 30 days, meaning that they were unsure where their next meal would come from. The survey emphasizes the need for programs to reach at-risk populations.



Governor Northam and First Lady at Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger event (October 20, 2020)

- Unemployment high/total job losses
  - » Pandemic-related job loss was not as severe in Virginia as in other states, but still took a toll on Virginians, especially on low-income households. “From March 2020 to March 2021, the Virginia Employment Commission estimates that establishments in Virginia lost 182,000 jobs, a decrease of 4.5%.” The Commonwealth has continued to see job growth through 2021, though we are not yet back to pre-pandemic levels.
- The Annual Household Food Security Survey found an average food insecurity rate of 8.5% for Virginia, a decrease of 1.1 percentage points over the past decade.<sup>4</sup> Overall, the report indicates that the rapid expansion of federal nutrition programs helped keep food insecurity rates stable year-over-year, although households with children and Black households reported higher levels of need at the national level.<sup>1</sup>
- Increase in SNAP participation
  - » In February 2020, 679,702 individuals (333,669 households) received SNAP benefits. By February 2021, there were 758,962 SNAP recipients (378,933 households), representing an 11.66% increase.
  - » SNAP participation peaked at 785,411 (388,954 households) in July 2020.
  - » SNAP application rates remain elevated, months after the state of emergency and extended unemployment benefits have ended.
- Increase in Women, Infants and Children (WIC) participation
  - » In February 2020, there were 108,730 WIC participants. By February 2021, WIC participation had increased by 11.1% to 122,239 participants.

## Wins for Food Insecure Families

- **CACFP At-risk Afterschool Meals requirement:** During the 2021 legislative session, Virginia passed HB 2135, requiring all eligible schools to participate in the At-Risk Afterschool Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), or partner with a community organization to make the program available. Introduced by Delegate Danica Roem, this bill is projected to expand access to afterschool meals in hundreds of schools across the Commonwealth, and encourage new coordination between schools and community partners. The legislation goes into effect in July 2022, and its impact will be realized during the 2022-2023 school year.
- **CEP requirement:** During the 2020 special session, Virginia passed HB 5113, requiring all eligible schools to participate in the Communi-

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/102076/err-298.pdf?v=5472.7>

ty Eligibility Provision (CEP). Introduced by Delegate Danica Roem, this bill was projected to add approximately 180 new schools to CEP, expanding no-cost breakfast and lunch to 109,000 additional Virginia students.

- **Pandemic-EBT implementation:** Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) was created as part of the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since November 2020, the Virginia Department of Social Services, in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education, has provided over \$800 million in nutrition benefits to Virginia families through the P-EBT Program. P-EBT benefits supplement the cost of meals that students missed while schools were closed or placed on part-time attendance schedules due to COVID-19.
- **Virginia Agriculture Food Assistance Program:** House Bill 2203, sponsored by Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn, and Senate Bill 1188, sponsored by Senator Ghazala Hashmi, establish the Virginia Agriculture Food Assistance Program and Fund. This initiative allows Virginia farmers and food producers to directly donate or sell their food products to food banks, increasing the availability of fresh produce for food-insecure families.

- **Virginia Food Access Investment Fund**

- » In 2020, Governor Northam signed House Bill 1509, sponsored by Delegate Delores McQuinn, and Senate Bill 1073, sponsored by Senator Jennifer McClellan, creating the Virginia Food Access Investment Program and Fund (VFAIF).
- » In July 2021, Governor Northam announced that 15 projects across the Commonwealth will receive a total of over \$620,000 in the inaugural round of Virginia Food Access Investment Fund grants. List of projects receiving VFAIF grants can be found here: <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2021/july/headline-902133-cn.html>
- » VFAIF follows the Equitable Food-Oriented Development model of using food and agriculture to create economic opportunities and healthy neighborhoods in historically marginalized communities.

- **SNAP Expansion**

- » Congress boosted SNAP benefits 15% with funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) through September 2021; households continue to receive maximum benefit allotments under emergency provisions through December 2021.
- » The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently re-evaluated the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), used to set SNAP benefits, which increased the purchasing power of the plan by 21% for the first time since it was introduced in 1975.
  - Nationally, the average benefits pre-pandemic were \$121 per person; Average benefits, once all emergency allotments end, will be an estimated \$169 per person, reflecting USDA's revised estimate of levels that will support a nutritious, practical, cost-effective diet.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 8/30/21



**Governor Northam and First Lady Pamela Northam at Capital Area Food Bank Bill Signing**

- » Broad-based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE)
  - Virginia expanded SNAP eligibility by adopting a provision known as BBCE, which increased the gross income test to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, and eliminated the resource test. With this expansion, it is estimated that over 25,000 households are newly eligible for SNAP.

- **Head Start Nutrition Benefit:** The Virginia Department of Social Services, in collaboration with the Virginia Head Start Collaboration Office and the Virginia Head Start Association, designed and implemented a Head Start Nutrition Benefit Program that allocated approximately \$3.5 million dollars to families with children enrolled in a Head Start Program. The program provided a one-time benefit of \$300 to over 10,000 children, allowing families to purchase groceries and other nutritious food items.
- **Virginia Fresh Match:** In August 2021, Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP), on behalf of the Virginia Fresh Match nutrition incentive network, was awarded a 3-year, \$2.2 million Gus Schumacher Covid Relief and Response grant (GusCRR) from the USDA. GusCRR funding enables Virginia Fresh Match (VFM) to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by SNAP participants and enhance the resilience of our local food systems.
- **WIC expansion:** In March 2021, the ARPA invested \$880 million in WIC services. The Virginia WIC Program received \$8.9 million to substantially increase the value of the WIC benefit for the purchase of fruits and vegetables. As a result, from June 2021 to September 2021, the monthly benefit increased from \$11 per woman and \$9 per child to \$35 per individual. Additionally, the ability to implement remote services has been a successful strategy in creating new



**Governor Northam packing 'We Care' boxes at Feed More in Richmond. More than 200,000 shelf-stable food boxes have been distributed by Virginia's food banks with the support of the Commonwealth, Sentara, and Truist.**

options and addressing commonly cited barriers of access and transportation. The physical presence waiver issued by the USDA remains in place beyond the Virginia State of Emergency declaration as it is tied to the Federal Public Health Emergency. This allowance has facilitated an increase in participation and a decrease in no-show rates.

- **Monthly Child Tax Credit**
  - » The Internal Revenue Service began sending out monthly child tax credit payments of \$250 - \$300 to approximately 35 million eligible families throughout the U.S. on July 15, 2021. The payments are set to continue through December 2021.
  - » The U.S. Census Bureau conducted a survey before and after the credit was sent out. In a span of just six weeks, it showed the credit coincided with a noticeable decline in food insufficiency and in those who reported having difficulty paying weekly expenses.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/13/1027397943/the-new-child-tax-credit-brings-a-drop-in-households-reporting-hunger>

## Opportunities on the Road Ahead

- **Advocate for permanent Summer EBT:** The Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (Summer EBT) program offers an exciting opportunity to reduce summer hunger by providing additional resources to purchase food during the summer months for families whose children are certified to receive free or reduced-price school meals during the school year. Summer EBT is a complement to the Summer Nutrition Programs (which support summer meal programs in low-income communities that are frequently combined with educational, enrichment, and recreational activities) and can help reduce food insecurity for low-income families, particularly in rural or other areas with limited access to summer meals. We must work with our partners in Congress to pass a permanent Summer EBT program.
- **Advocate for a permanent Child Tax Credit:** We have already seen the transformative impact of a monthly Child Tax Credit (CTC) for low income families. A CTC that the government delivers monthly, rather than as a lump sum after the year has ended, can help families make ends meet by boosting their incomes throughout the year. Struggling families need the Child Tax Credit expansion on a permanent basis, and we will see more food secure Virginia families as a result.
- **Sustain gains in school meal access:** We learned a clear lesson from the pandemic: school nutrition programs are vital components of any community food security strategy. As we continue this journey through COVID relief and recovery, let's maintain that momentum by recognizing and bolstering the link between school nutrition and classroom success; celebrating the hard work of school nutrition staff; deepening food access partnerships between schools and community organizations; and maximizing program access and awareness (both while school is in session AND during holiday breaks, summer vacations, and afterschool programming). Virginia also has an opportunity to advance the recommendations of the Task Force on Culturally Inclusive School Meals, which released its final report in September 2021.
- **Invest in healthcare partnerships:** The expansion of **Unite Us** into a statewide technology platform offers a tremendous opportunity to connect vulnerable Virginians to social services and food access programs. Working with Unite Us to build coordinated care networks of health and social service providers, the Commonwealth will implement an integrated e-referral system that unites government agencies, health care providers, and community-based partners. Virginia should continue to make investments in the capacity of the coordinated care network to strengthen service delivery mechanisms, establish sustainable funding streams, and improve health outcomes among food insecure households.
- **Expand Fresh Match network:** VFM will partner with 10 regional food access organizations, grow the network to 160+ food retail outlets who

offer community-based and affordable access to fruits and vegetables, provide viable sales outlets for 650+ Virginia farmers and food producers, and increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by SNAP participants.

- **Expand and sustain the Virginia Food Access Investment Fund (VFAIF):** The VFAIF has funded food access projects all over Virginia in its inaugural year. Due to limited capacity at the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, not all the excellent projects could be funded. By sustaining and increasing the VFAIF budget, we can improve access to good food and catalyze economic development in under-resourced communities.

- **Produce Rx:** In 2021, Governor Northam signed HB 2065, sponsored by Delegate Delores McQuinn, directing the Department of Social Services (DSS) in coordination with the Department of Medical Assistance Services, to convene a workgroup to develop a plan for a three year pilot Produce Rx Program. The goal of the program is to incentivize consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. The legislation requires DSS to submit a report outlining the activities of the workgroup and plan details to the Governor and General Assembly leadership by October 1, 2021. State financing will be required to support pilot implementation in 2022. ■



Governor Northam speaking at WeCare event – Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore

*The Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger was developed in partnership with:*



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updated September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
visit [FeedVA.org](http://FeedVA.org) for the latest updates

# Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger



Commonwealth of Virginia  
2020

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October 20, 2020

Dear Fellow Virginians,

As a human crisis, not just a healthcare crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought renewed attention to the broader social determinants of health— food security chief among them.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, Feeding America estimated that nearly 843,000 Virginians were food insecure, including 234,000 children. Current Feeding America projections indicate that an additional 447,000 Virginians will experience food insecurity at some point during the next year because of COVID-19.

The Commonwealth has made dramatic progress against hunger in recent years but we know that we can and must do more to fix this solvable problem. At the beginning of my Administration, we prioritized addressing nutrition and food access through our Governor's Children's Cabinet. Working together, we have expanded access to child nutrition programs, promoted local agriculture, strengthened cross-sector partnerships, and invested in food access projects in under-resourced communities. I am grateful to the members of the Children's Cabinet working groups who have worked diligently to strengthen Virginia's food system.

One tool that will assist our efforts going forward is this Roadmap to End Hunger. Collectively, we have identified a cohesive set of goals and strategies that we know will move the needle on food security in Virginia. The Roadmap to End Hunger provides critical next steps to developing substantial policy recommendations, programs and partnerships that will benefit our children and communities for years to come.

This report looks beyond our current struggles and outlines a way forward to not only help transform Virginia's food system but to also make significant progress towards ending hunger in the Commonwealth for good.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph S. Northam".

Ralph Northam



Governor Northam at We Care food box pack out event (July 31, 2020)

# INTRODUCTION

Hunger in Virginia is a solvable problem. By and large, the resources we need are available to us, but too many barriers still stand between low-income families and affordable, healthful foods. We must address the realities of systemic under-investment in marginalized communities, and the resulting injustices of unaffordable housing, transportation, health care, and nutrition. We can and we must do more to overcome the obstacles that plague federal nutrition programs and inhibit market-based solutions.

**Food access is one of the great equity issues of our time.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the fundamental inequities that have long existed in our food system. Feeding America estimates that nearly half a million more Virginians will experience food insecurity this year as a result of pandemic-related job losses, disproportionately impacting minority communities.<sup>2</sup> This report was largely developed before the pandemic came to the Commonwealth, but the solutions remain the same: maximize federal nutrition program participation and access, invest in a strong regional food system, and empower local communities.

Governor of Virginia Ralph S. Northam and First Lady of Virginia Pamela Northam are committed to improving food security in the Commonwealth. They have established a nutrition and food security work group within the Children's Cabinet to develop goals, identify strategies, and make comprehensive recommendations to the Governor that will expand access to nutritious food and decrease food insecurity, especially among students, mothers, and young children. Additionally, in the wake of COVID-19, a State Feeding Taskforce was convened to provide coordination of Virginia's emergency response efforts to increased demand for food and food supply chain disruptions in communities across the Commonwealth. Their work builds on the efforts initiated by former Governor Terence R. McAuliffe and First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe, who established the Commonwealth Council on Bridging the Nutritional Divide and expanded meal programs for children more than any administration in Virginia history.

The Roadmap is not intended to be a one-size-fits-all, comprehensive set of recommendations for achieving universal food security. Rather, it seeks to illuminate a pathway to improved food access for all Virginians through practical programmatic and policy solutions. It should serve as a guide and source of inspiration for the people who work every day to organize their neighbors, learn from one another, advocate and act to achieve lasting change.

# CHILDREN'S CABINET OVERVIEW

## The Way Ahead for Virginia's Children: Establishing the Children's Cabinet

On June 21, 2018, Governor Northam issued Executive Order Number 11 establishing the Children's Cabinet for the purpose of developing goals, strategies, and recommendations to support children and families across the Commonwealth.

The Children's Cabinet is chaired by First Lady Pamela Northam and members include Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring, Secretary of Education Atif Qarni, Secretary of Health and Human Resources Dr. Daniel Carey, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran, and Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax.

The Executive Order outlined four key priority areas for the Children's Cabinet: Early Childhood Development and School Readiness, Nutrition and Food Security, Trauma-Informed Care, and Student Safety.



First Lady of Virginia Pamela Northam

## Nutrition and Food Security

The overarching goal of the Children's Cabinet regarding nutrition and food security is to ensure that Virginia's children have consistent, reliable access to healthy foods. To achieve this goal, the Children's Cabinet has focused on three primary and contributing objectives:

1. Expanding access to nutritious food and decreasing food insecurity for children
2. Expanding access to nutritious food and decreasing food insecurity for pregnant women
3. Promoting community-based food systems to increase access to healthy, local foods

In order to enhance coordination across state agencies and external stakeholder organizations, the Children's Cabinet has been supported by a food security working group and is composed of participants from state agencies, nonprofits, and advocacy organizations.

Early childhood is the most critical time period for nutritional access because of the lifelong impact food insecurity has on growth and development. Children benefit from federal nutrition programs when they participate in child care and pre-K programs; First Lady Pamela Northam's goal of universal access for three and four-year-old children would have a significant, positive impact on efforts to end hunger in Virginia. Through Executive Directive Four, Governor Northam established the Executive Leadership Team on School Readiness to develop a plan to ensure that all at-risk three and four-year-olds in Virginia have access to a quality, subsidized early education option by 2025.

# VIRGINIA ROADMAP TO END HUNGER

At its October 2, 2018 meeting, the Children's Cabinet directed the Nutrition and Food Security working group to assemble a report that offers a comprehensive review of food access in the Commonwealth. The intent of the report is to provide concrete strategies for accomplishing the ultimate goal of ensuring Virginia children and vulnerable populations have consistent, reliable access to healthy foods.

The Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger report includes input from the Governor's Children's Cabinet, feedback from regional town hall meetings, and contributions from Nutrition and Food Security working group members.



## TAKEAWAYS FROM REGIONAL TOWN HALLS

From March to June 2019, input was solicited from key leaders, stakeholder groups, and community members who work within and are impacted by the food system. The Federation of Virginia Food Banks, Virginia Department of Social Services, and Virginia Governor's Office led town hall meetings in seven locations (Abingdon, Roanoke, Danville, Hampton, Fairfax Co., Norfolk, and Richmond City). These listening sessions offered key insights into how unique challenges and initiatives at the local level can inform statewide policy.

Increase communication. Recognition that while there is significant work around food insecurity in most communities, there are often gaps in communication surrounding work that is happening.

Substantial transportation issues and barriers exist in both rural and urban communities.

Opportunities exist to bundle/layer service providing a holistic approach to addressing the needs of the family across a range of services and programs.

A stigma around hunger and food access still exists creating additional barriers to food access and program participation.

Nutrition education and exposure to healthy/nutrient-dense food is a critical component including how and what to purchase, prepare, and cook. Numerous new and existing programs include a cooking component (classes for all ages/target groups).

Enhance community collaboration/partnerships by establishing task forces, holding engagement meetings, creating action planning sessions, and identifying regional champions.

Workforce development, skills training and financial literacy are contributing factors and part of the continuum of services required to address food insecurity.

Emphasize the role of food access in better health outcomes.

There is growing interest/momentum in urban farming/community gardens and consumers desire to have improved connectivity to the food system.

Recognize the significant benefits of two-generational programming.

Recognition of limited access to nutritious foods specifically in food deserts.

# DATA STORY

## HUNGER IN VIRGINIA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. According to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap report, the best available approximation of food insecurity prevalence, 842,870 Virginians experienced food insecurity in 2018, including 233,530 children.<sup>1</sup>

Feeding America estimates that an additional **447,000** Virginians will experience food insecurity in 2020 as a result of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, increasing the Commonwealth's food insecurity rate from 9.9% to **15.1%** on an annual basis.<sup>2</sup>

### Food Insecurity and Poverty

Food insecurity is a symptom of poverty. Food is not a fixed cost so it is often sacrificed, in terms of both quantity and quality, to accommodate other basic needs. There are steps we can take now to increase household purchasing power in the short-term and assuage the conditions of poverty in the long-term, thereby reducing hunger in our communities..

# 876,000

people in Virginia live in poverty; represents one-in-nine (11%) Virginians<sup>3</sup>

# 340,000

family households in Virginia live in poverty, while an additional 937k households are above the poverty level but do not earn enough to cover the "bare minimum" survival budget for child care, housing, food, transportation, health care and other needs. These are Asset Limited, Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) families.<sup>3</sup>

### What does it cost to afford the basic necessities?

The Household Survival Budget gives the cost of housing, child care, food, transportation, and health care at a bare-minimum "survival" level. It does not include any savings, leaving households without a cushion for unexpected expenses and unable to invest in the future. Yet even this minimal budget was much higher than the adjusted Federal Poverty Level of \$11,880 for a single adult and \$24,300 for a family of four in 2016.<sup>4</sup>

## Health Disparities

Studies have shown that food insecurity is associated with decreased nutrient intakes; increased rates of mental health problems and depression, diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia; worse outcomes on health exams; being in fair or poor health; and poor sleep outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

Food insecure seniors are **2.33×** more likely to report being in poor or fair health compared to food-secure seniors<sup>6</sup>



Food insecure adults report **greater difficulty** affording a **diabetic diet** and **lower abilities to address issues related to diabetes** compared to food secure adults.<sup>7</sup>

## Nutrition Program Participation

**75%** of eligible Virginia seniors participate in SNAP<sup>8</sup>

**61%** of free and reduced students receive school breakfast<sup>9</sup>

**15%** of free and reduced students receive a free meal during the summer<sup>9</sup>

## COVID-19 Economic Fallout

Studies show a sharp increase in food insecurity resulting from the economic downturn. A Virginia Tech survey of Virginia households in April 2020 found that 69.4% of respondents said it was ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’ true that “I/we worried whether my food would run out before I/we got money to buy more”<sup>10</sup>

- » Nearly 61% said it was “often” or “sometimes” true that “I/we couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.”<sup>10</sup>
- » 17% replied ‘yes’ to “In the last 12 months was your child or were the children ever hungry but you just couldn’t afford more food.”<sup>10</sup>
- » Northwestern Institute for Policy research estimates that food insecurity in Virginia increased from 9.4% in February to 22% in June.<sup>11</sup>
- » Feeding America estimates 447,000 more Virginians will become food insecure this year – passing 1.2 million total.<sup>2</sup>
- » 4 of the 5 U.S. localities with the greatest expected increase in child food insecurity percentage are in northern Virginia (Falls Church, Arlington, Loudoun, Fairfax City).<sup>2</sup>

**69.4%** of Virginia households said it was ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’ true that “I/we worried whether my food would run out before I/we got money to buy more”<sup>10</sup>





## TOP TEN BY 2025

**These aspirational goals represent our greatest opportunities to reduce food insecurity in Virginia over the next five years:**

1. On average, 70% of free or reduced-price eligible students participating in school lunch will also participate in school breakfast.
2. Every school with a 50% Identified Student Percentage or greater will participate in the Community Eligibility Provision.
3. All localities will have adequate nutritional support for children during school breaks through Summer EBT, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and/or food bank programming such as School-based Pantries and Weekend Food Backpacks.
4. The SNAP participation rate will reach 90% (of eligible individuals) or higher.
5. Virginia Fresh Match and the WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs will be available at all highly accessible, high-need farmers' markets.
6. Virginians will have streamlined access to food security information and benefit programs.
7. A framework for incentivizing investment in food deserts and marginalized communities will be established.
8. Evidence-based nutrition education programming will be made available to food insecure families in all regions of the Commonwealth.
9. Home delivered meals for seniors and people living with a disability will be provided as a Medicaid covered service.
10. A statewide network of Hunger Action Coalitions will be established to advance the goals of the Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger and to identify and address local opportunities for improving food access.



## EXPAND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

### Ensure all schools with a 50% Identified Student Percentage (ISP) or higher participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

- » Provide targeted outreach and technical assistance by the Virginia Department of Education in partnership with No Kid Hungry and the Virginia Poverty Law Center to include providing in-depth financial analysis and expanding partnerships with community stakeholders

### Ensure all low-income children have access to nutrition programs during school breaks

- » Secure Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) funding to provide additional funds for SNAP households with children in localities with limited access to Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sites
- » Expand the number of SFSP congregate meal sites through sponsorship recruitment, outreach, and technical assistance
- » Increase the number of SFSP sites serving more than one meal per day



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- » Coordinate across state agencies and private partners to implement an annual outreach/marketing strategy to improve awareness among eligible families
- » Test innovative service delivery modules for child hunger programs

### **Achieve 70% average daily school breakfast participation among free and reduced price meal qualifying students compared to school lunch participation**

- » Sustain and grow state funding streams to support Breakfast After the Bell models
- » Require actionable improvement plans from schools that are below the established school breakfast participation goal
- » Assist schools and districts with reaching the established school breakfast goal by providing implementation support and technical assistance
- » Engage school administrators in supporting school meal programs



**Eliminate the reduced-price meal** category to ensure all low-income families have access to school meals at no cost

### **Remove financial barriers to school meal access**

- » Eliminate the reduced-price meal category to ensure all low-income families have access to school meals at no cost
- » Explore other measures to reduce the burden of school meal debt affecting families struggling to make ends meet

### **Ensure the availability of at least one Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) afterschool meal/snack opportunity in all eligible localities**

- » Through outreach initiatives and technical assistance, ensure each school division with at least one eligible school participates in CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals or Snacks
- » Assist schools and community organizations with establishing programs, expanding access, and reaching the established CACFP goal

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## Sustain funding support for child nutrition programs provided by Virginia's food banks

- » Meet the basic needs of low-income families with children by providing food for the weekends, establishing food distributions at schools, and serving nutritious meals through afterschool and summer programs

## Increase the number of meals served through CACFP at daycare centers and family daycare homes by 20%

- » Extend program eligibility to centers and homes receiving subsidy funding
- » Implement consistent messaging around CACFP as an indicator of quality childcare
- » Increase training opportunities for CACFP sponsors and eligible centers
- » Provide targeted outreach, data sharing, and technical assistance through a sustained partnership of the Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia Department of Health, and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation

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**Increase the number of meals**  
served through CACFP at daycare centers  
and family daycare homes by 20%



# IMPROVE PARTICIPATION IN SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) AND WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC) PROGRAM

## Achieve 90% participation among eligible individuals in SNAP by 2025

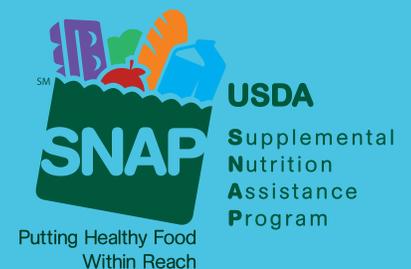
- » Create partnerships and increase the number of outreach vendors to improve SNAP outreach, particularly among seniors and in rural areas
- » Expand outreach and application assistance services in areas of Virginia where eligibility is high and participation is low, including addressing lack of broadband preventing access to online applications and limited transportation, which prevents eligible participants visiting local Virginia Department of Social Services offices
- » Partner with local offices to promote best practices to increase access to SNAP benefits for eligible households
- » Utilize technology to improve program access including an automated phone system, extending program reach, and online services
- » Engage and test innovative strategies and models to increase SNAP awareness and participation

## Provide access to employment, education, and/or training opportunities for SNAP recipients

- » Partner with community organizations and educational institutions to increase employment, education and training services for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs)
- » Increase the number of SNAP Employment and Training providers and leverage federal funding available as part of the SNAP Employment & Training State Plan
- » Virginia will continue to take the SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) Pledge. “Pledge States” pledge to offer employment and training services to time-limited SNAP recipients. Taking the pledge allows Virginia to receive additional federal funds to provide employment and training services to SNAP recipients that are able-bodied adults without dependents

## Increase the reach of SNAP nutrition education

- » Work with contracted partners who help SNAP recipients make healthy choices with their benefits, to extend their reach and achieve a greater level of SNAP recipient population penetration



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- » Identify additional, innovative, and non-traditional venues for SNAP nutrition education to enhance the education experience and tie to purchases of healthy foods and skills in food preparation

### **Increase participation in the Virginia WIC Program by 2 percent**

- » Complete a process improvement plan to evaluate all aspects of the WIC Program
- » Track eligibility and participation across categories including pregnant women, postpartum women, breast-feeding women, infants, and children 2-5 years through implementation of the WIC district scorecard
- » Implement data sharing agreements to identify potentially eligible participants
- » Support data sharing agreements between state agencies to identify and connect with those who are participating in SNAP, Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) but are not participating in WIC
- » Include screening and applying for WIC in state agency online screening and application portal

### **Intensify WIC outreach efforts by participating in or coordinating community activities in conjunction with local family, health, and nutrition security-related events**

- » The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) will work with local agency providers to establish an annual outreach plan detailing their goals

### **Improve the participant experience with the WIC program**

- » Develop a WIC mobile app for participants of the program to provide assistance with food benefits, nutrition education, location of WIC authorized vendors, and assistance identifying approved WIC foods
- » Pilot online tools to allow participants to schedule WIC appointments and complete online nutrition education without having to physically visit a clinic to have benefits issued





Virginia's **senior population** is expected to **double by 2030**, which means our public safety net and service delivery systems **will need to grow** and become more responsive to the unique needs of older food insecure Virginians.<sup>12</sup>

## INCREASE NUTRITION SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

### Grow caseload for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

» Expand CSFP program participation to meet the growing demand

Low-income seniors have the opportunity to receive a monthly box of nutritious USDA commodities once per month through the CSFP. Administered by Virginia's food banks, the program began in 2016 and currently serves its maximum caseload of **10,801 people**.

### Increase participation in federal nutrition programs among eligible seniors

- » Evaluate participation in the Elderly Simplified Application Demonstration grant
- » Re-brand SNAP for seniors to encourage participation with support from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and Federation of Virginia Food Banks
- » Increase sponsor and site participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- » Provide outreach and program information on CACFP to adult daycare providers as part of licensing processes through Virginia Department of Social Services.



## GROW ACCESS TO LOCAL FOODS FOR SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES



### Increase procurement of Virginia Grown foods in child nutrition programs to \$22 million annually by 2022

- » Provide financial incentives to defray administrative and/or offset additional costs of local products to encourage the purchase of local foods
- » Develop resources and training for farmers, school and child nutrition staff, early care education sites, and educators with interagency support from Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Department of Health, and Virginia Cooperative Extension

### Utilize healthy food incentives to increase consumer purchasing power so individuals and families with tight food budgets can bring home more fruits and vegetables.



**Virginia Fresh Match (VFM)** is a voluntary network of farmers markets, mobile markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), farm stands and neighborhood grocery stores who work collaboratively to provide healthy food incentives. VFM incentives double the value of federal nutrition benefits, like SNAP, and increase consumer purchasing power so individuals and families with tight food budgets can bring home more Virginia Grown fruits and vegetables.

- » Provide Virginia Fresh Match incentives and support for partner retail outlets that serve high-need populations, including farmers markets, mobile markets, farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), and neighborhood grocery stores
- » Secure state funding, as part of a diverse incentive funding portfolio, to support Virginia Fresh Match incentives at retail outlets that serve high-need populations
- » Work with public, private and nonprofit stakeholders to promote, integrate, and secure ongoing support for Virginia Fresh Match at partner retail outlets
- » Work with Virginia Cooperative Extension SNAP-Ed to increase the number of farmers markets that accept SNAP and offer Virginia Fresh Match incentives, to continue to integrate the Healthy Retail Program and Virginia Fresh Match, and to increase SNAP-Ed programming at partner retail outlets

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## Expand WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP) statewide

- » Increase the number of WIC FMNP outlets in VA from seven Health Districts to 10 Health Districts (out of 33 total) serving high need populations
- » Increase WIC FMNP redemption rates from 39 percent to 60 percent by improving access to authorized farmers at farmers markets where the vouchers are issued
- » Increase the number of senior FMNP outlets in VA from 10 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to 15 AAAs (out of 25 total) serving high need populations
- » Increase senior and WIC FMNP authorized farmers and farmers markets throughout VA by expanding from five growing regions to six growing regions (out of 6 total)
- » Increase the number of authorized growers in the areas identified as food deserts

## Establish the Virginia Agriculture Surplus System (VASS)

- » Facilitate the donation of local food crops to the Federation of Virginia Food Banks through the provision of a safe, efficient system, which allows for the reimbursement of farmers for costs incurred in the process of harvesting, packaging and/or processing foods intended for donation

## MILK FOR GOOD

Image used with permission from The Dairy Alliance.



Milk is the **most requested** yet **least donated** food item in Virginia's emergency food network. For the first time, in partnership with The Dairy Alliance and the Virginia State Dairymen's Association, all seven regional Feeding America food banks are purchasing fresh, locally processed milk to improve the nutritional inventory of the Commonwealth's pantries.

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## **STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS BETWEEN FOOD ACCESS PROGRAMS AND THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR**

### **Support the integration of the Hunger Vital Sign screening into well child visits, assessments, home visiting programs, and systems to identify households as being at risk for food insecurity**

- » Integrate the Hunger Vital Sign screening into existing systems including: electronic medical records, referral systems, state agency applications, and others
- » Create resource and referral information that healthcare providers, state and local organizations, and other groups can offer to families who are identified as being food insecure. These should include information for federal nutrition programs, state programs, seasonal programs, as well as local food assistance programs
- » Communicate the availability of the Hunger Vital Sign resources to healthcare providers, public health providers, state agencies, and others

### **Increase state agency support for federal nutrition program utilization through partnerships with healthcare providers and organizations**

- » Increase partnerships with the medical community through the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Department of Social Services to increase SNAP and WIC utilization. The departments will encourage medical providers to educate patients about the impact of nutrition on health outcomes

### **Develop options to expand home-delivered meals for older adults and individuals with disabilities as a Medicaid-covered service**

- » Identify and evaluate options to provide home delivered meals as a Medicaid covered service

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## ENCOURAGE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT IN FOOD DESERTS AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

### Utilize urban agriculture as a strategy to increase healthy food access, revitalize communities, connect multiple generations, and grow and sell culturally appropriate food

- » Create statewide consensus to define urban agriculture, capture current urban agriculture sites, identify opportunities for urban agriculture expansion, and develop programmatic and policy recommendations to expand urban agriculture
- » Identify and promote policies necessary to support urban agriculture and remove policies hindering urban agriculture in communities
- » Provide urban agriculture educational programs, outreach, and technical assistance through partnerships with local organizations, non-profits, Virginia's land grant universities, Virginia State University and Virginia Tech, as well as Virginia Cooperative Extension

### Partner with the private sector to increase access to locally produced, healthy food for low-income individuals

- » Support corner store initiatives aimed at improving access to healthy foods within underserved communities across the Commonwealth
- » Coordinate investment in small businesses and community development projects in underserved neighborhoods, which could include food hubs, logistics companies, and food incubators/small batch manufacturing, and others
- » Invest in innovative food retail strategies through the Virginia Food Access Investment Program and Fund and other economic development opportunities
- » Utilize Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD) and similar strategies to create economic opportunities in food and agriculture, healthy neighborhoods, and build community assets, pride, and power by and with historically marginalized communities



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## Explore Corporate Philanthropy Opportunities

- » The Commonwealth will work with corporations and corporate foundations to identify opportunities for donations to charitable food organizations. This may include, but is not limited to, funding initiatives, equipment, or donations of perishable and non-perishable foods

## AMPLIFY PUBLIC AWARENESS OF HUNGER IN VIRGINIA AND SUPPORT INFORMATION SHARING ACROSS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS

### Establish a comprehensive, user-friendly, online resource that provides public access to statewide data related to food security, nutrition programming, and diet-related illness.

- » Support FeedVA.org as the Commonwealth's resource for data, connectivity to resources, and best practices related to Virginia's food system and food access
- » Maintain up-to-date statewide data annually by establishing partner agreements with state agencies who collect pertinent data
- » Promote FeedVA.org to increase awareness to the public of its availability
- » Support the promotion of Hunger Action Month and the Feed VA Day of Action in September

### Conduct a recurring food security survey

- » Identify Virginia-specific food insecurity data to inform outreach, programs, and policy development

### Explore ways to address hunger within the college and university community

- » Identify risk factors for food insecurity among college and university community members
- » Convene partners to address hunger within the college and university community

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## SUPPORT COMMUNITY ORGANIZING TO COMBAT FOOD INSECURITY AND HUNGER

Every region in Virginia will have a local Hunger Action Coalition to combat food insecurity and hunger in their local communities.

- » Support the development of Hunger Action Coalitions to pursue the goals of the Roadmap at the local level and initiate successful collaborations
- » Convene Hunger Action Coalitions to review progress on the Roadmap to End Hunger goals and activities

## LOCAL HUNGER ACTION COALITIONS

State policies and programmatic priorities will only be successful if tied to authentic partnerships with grassroots organizations, which are driven by the lived experiences of food insecure families. The following are two examples of advocacy groups organizing at the local level to improve food access for their communities. Investing in their work and offering space for these groups to learn from one another will strengthen food access across the Commonwealth.



### RICHMOND FOOD JUSTICE ALLIANCE:

The Richmond Food Justice Alliance (RFJA) is a resident-led organization advancing healthy food access by addressing historical inequities that drive low food access in communities within the City of Richmond. Alliance members serve on the Richmond's Food Access and Equity Task Force which is housed at Richmond City Health District (RCHD). The Task Force conducts local food access and equity policy assessments and promotes urban agriculture, nutrition education, community engagement, policy change, and overall access to healthy food for low-income, low-access communities in Richmond. It is composed of community advocates, academia, community leaders, members of the business sector, representatives from local government, and other stakeholders. Through RFJA, residents of the Commonwealth are being given the opportunity to make recommendations for policies that will ultimately affect their communities. This represents a shift from the typical dynamic where state agencies merely inform residents of policy decisions to a new dynamic where state agencies authentically partner with residents to craft policies.



# LOCAL HUNGER ACTION COALITIONS

## CULTIVATE CHARLOTTESVILLE'S FOOD JUSTICE NETWORK:

Cultivate Charlottesville is an integrated approach to building a healthy and just food system personally, in communities, and across systems and structures. It is implemented through the City Schoolyard Garden initiatives for youth, the Urban Agriculture Collective farming and community market, and the Food Justice Network advocacy and partnerships. The Charlottesville Food Justice Network program (CFJN) was initially launched as part of a USDA Community Food Projects Grant called Plant, Grow, Harvest! Charlottesville. Alongside partners in the grant, CFJN focuses on building equity and food justice with youth and their families facing economic challenges. Central to the vision of CFJN is a commitment to address racial inequities, promote systems change and center the voices and choices of people experiencing food inequities. With more than 50 food security and hunger relief organizations operating in Charlottesville, CFJN is striving to implement an integrated approach that will truly move the needle on food insecurity and decrease health disparities.



Local Foods, Local Places  
tour of food equity sites  
in Charlottesville



# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP



## Donate

your time, money, and resources to the emergency food system



## Grow

nutritious foods in your backyard or a community garden to sell or donate to a local pantry



## Educate

yourself and others about the importance of healthy food access and the extent of food insecurity in Virginia through [FeedVA.org](http://FeedVA.org) and other resources



## Advocate

for policies in your school system and local and state government that improve food access for low-income households



## Shop

at your local farmers market or community-owned grocery store



## Organize

your communities to collaboratively and inclusively address barriers to healthy food access

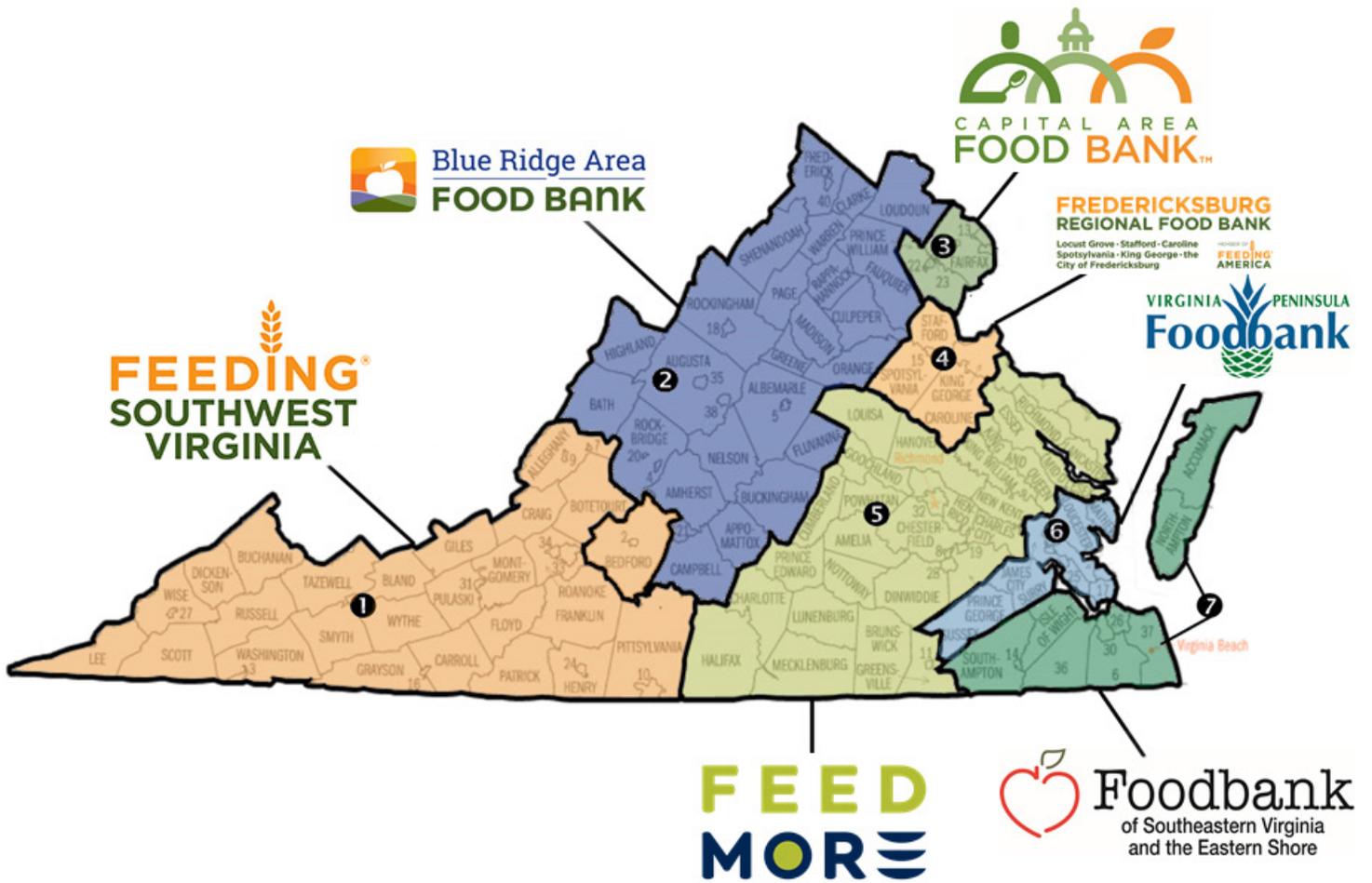
# APPENDIX A

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# APPENDIX B

## FOOD BANK SERVICE AREA MAP:



Members of:



FEDERATION OF VIRGINIA FOOD BANKS

*Developed in partnership with:*



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**[governor.virginia.gov/childrens-cabinet](http://governor.virginia.gov/childrens-cabinet)**



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visit [FeedVA.org](http://FeedVA.org) for the latest updates