



Prince George's County, Maryland | 2021 Policy Agenda

The Capital Area Food Bank projects that the number of food insecure individuals in Prince George's County will have increased by approximately 20 percent by the end of 2020, to nearly 150,000. This estimate puts the level of need in the county higher than that of any other jurisdiction in the region. Although the food bank is on track to distribute food for nearly 12 million meals to Prince George's in fiscal year 2021, we are asking for the support of policymakers on behalf of the clients we serve. It will take all of us—across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors—to holistically support the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities. The requests below represent our agenda and recommendations as to how the local government can reduce the burdens of hunger and poverty over the coming year.

Executive Summary

2021 will provide policymakers with the opportunity to enact changes that determine the pace of recovery, the strength of the rebuild in our region, and the immediacy of the impact on those in need. Below is an overview of the food bank's requests for Prince George's County.

In the last decade, the Food Bank has distributed just over 92 million meals in Prince George's County. It is clear that we must do more for our clients than simply provide food.

STANDARDIZE AND INCORPORATE FOOD INSECURITY METRICS INTO STRATEGIC PLANNING

The county's General Plan (GP) has been in existence since 1964; over the last seven decades, the plan has been instrumental in helping policymakers track, prioritize, and respond to various measures and objectives for the betterment of the residents throughout the county.¹ *The food bank requests, in accordance with the recommendations forthcoming from the Food Security Task Force, that "food security" be included as an element within the GP, and that a more tailored food security plan be produced thereafter. We request that the county use our [Food Security Playbook](#) as a resource to identify various metrics for inclusion.*

ADAPT THE STAND UP AND DELIVER PROGRAM TO THE NEEDS PRESENTED BY THE PANDEMIC

The Stand Up and Deliver program has supported emergency response by utilizing resources from the county government, local nonprofits, and restaurants to deliver food to those in need.² *Based on our own experience delivering food to providers within the program, as well as feedback from our clients and nonprofit partners, we request that the county make the following revisions to Stand Up and Deliver: expand the usage of data to enhance resource allocation and increase transparency; release COVID-19 distributional guidance for nonprofits providing food to the general public; and create means for those without cars, or with a disability or compromised immune system, to benefit from the program.*

¹ "Plan 2035 Approved General Plan," *Prince George's County Planning Department*, May 4, 2015, https://issuu.com/mncppc/docs/plan_2035_approved_general_plan_boa

² "Stand Up and Deliver," *Prince George's County*, <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/3451/Stand-Up-Deliver-COVID-19-Donations>



CREATE A COUNTY-LEVEL EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is one of the most effective anti-poverty tools in U.S. history. Maryland is one of 28 states to supply its own additional credit that builds upon the federal EITC, and counties throughout the state are beginning to enact local credits as well. ***We request that the county slowly phase in a similar credit to Montgomery County's Working Families Income Supplement (WFIS) that will play a large role in the upcoming tax season.*** This credit would provide nearly 75,000 working-poor families with the funds to pay for food, medical coverage, or overdue expenses. It will undoubtedly alleviate hunger and economic hardship for the workers who have lost jobs, wages, and sadly, even family members due to the pandemic.

"I know folks who have received the Working Families Income Supplement; it has gone a long way for them, and their families. The cost of living is too high here, and the income not enough. It would be great to get something like this in Prince George's."
- Jacqui Seay, Prince George's County, MD, Client Leadership Council | Class of 2020-2021

CONDUCT A COORDINATED OUTREACH CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL WELFARE

Prince George's County is anticipating a loss of \$134 million in revenue for FY21, and it has been documented that the county spends only a fraction of surrounding jurisdictions' investments in health, human services, and social welfare.^{3 4} ***Given the reality of this fiscal climate, and the uncertainty of congressional response, we request that the county invest in a strategic and coordinated effort to increase participation in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Women Infants and Children), Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT), Medicaid, the EITC, and Economic Impact Payments (EIP). Moreover, we request the creation of a Utilization Commission to formulate a recommendation to the County Executive and County Council to further track, assess, and increase participation in these programs.*** Through our conversations with advocates, policymakers, and governmental administrators, we believe the county can activate millions of dollars in federal social welfare by hiring a full-time staffer to work among departments, implement and negotiate data-sharing agreements, and incorporate research-oriented practices into existing and newly created outreach practices.

PILOT FREE MEALS PROGRAM WITH HIGHER POVERTY THRESHOLD

Eligibility standards for free and reduced-price school meals are set by the United States Department of Agriculture and are applied uniformly across the country, regardless of the estimated cost of living in a given district or county. Prince George's self-sufficiency standard (defined as "what it takes for a family to make ends meet at a minimally adequate level without public or private assistance") is nearly twice the threshold for free and reduced-price school meal eligibility.⁵ ***We request that Prince George's County***

³ Kevin Kinnally, "Prince George's Writes Down Revenue Projections by \$134 million" *Maryland Association of Counties*, April 27, 2020, <https://conduitstreet.mdcountries.org/2020/04/27/prince-georges-writes-down-revenue-projections-by-134-million/>

⁴ Ashley M. Kranz et al., "Assessing Health and Human Services Needs to Support Integrated *Health in all Policies* Plan for Prince George's County, Maryland" *Rand Corporation*, 2020, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA647-1.html

⁵ Self Sufficiency Standard Maryland," *University of Washington*, <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/Maryland>



Public Schools (PGCPS) launch a pilot program in one to three schools to provide free meals to children from families with incomes between 185 and 300 percent of the poverty level.⁶

ENLIST ALL ELIGIBLE SCHOOLS IN THE MARYLAND MEALS FOR ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

The Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) program provides state funding to school districts to offer free breakfast in the classroom to all students. The PGCPS system has 77 eligible schools that are not enrolled in MMFA, with an estimated 65,000 students that could be receiving free breakfast.⁷

Although the program is at capacity and cannot enlist any more schools, we request that PGCPS place all 77 of these eligible schools on the waiting list. This will position the county to be enrolled in case the program is expanded, and it will signal to state legislators that more funding is needed.

⁶ This proposed poverty threshold range for the pilot program encompasses income just in excess of free and reduced-price meal eligibility, and reflects the self-sufficiency standard within the county.

⁷ Calculations performed by No Kid Hungry Maryland.