The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a federal tax credit designed to boost the income of individuals working in low-wage jobs. The credit has been proven to reduce poverty, encourage work, support the cognitive development of children, and disproportionately benefit communities of color. Virginia is one of six states in the country with a non-refundable EITC structure, which is less beneficial to low-income families. Thus, the commonwealth could make significant progress by allowing localities to create county and city-level EITC programs. In Alexandria City, nearly 9,000 low-income tax filers would receive credits to support the provision of necessities.

Alexandria has one of the lowest SNAP utilization rates of the jurisdictions in the Food Bank’s Northern Virginia service area, with just 43% of eligible individuals participating in the program. This leaves an estimated $17 million going unused annually. Similarly, based on IRS data and the Commonwealth’s EITC utilization rate, we estimate that nearly 2,600 city residents missed out on more than $5.6 million total in 2018. After conversations with advocates, policymakers, governmental administrators, and clients, we believe the city could and should activate millions of dollars in federal social welfare by hiring a full-time staffer to increase synergy between federal, state, and local governments and ongoing community-based utilization efforts; to implement and negotiate data-sharing agreements; and to incorporate research-oriented practices into existing and newly created outreach practices.

We recommend the city include a request to the Virginia delegation for Dillon Rule legislation that would allow the City of Alexandria to create these programs and help lift low-income residents out of poverty.

We request that the city invest in a strategic and coordinated effort to strengthen inter-programmatic utilization efforts and increase participation in social safety net programs.
Implement ‘Health in All Policies’ Approach to Governance

“Health in All Policies” (HiAP), as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is “a collaborative approach that integrates and articulates health considerations into policymaking across sectors to improve the health of all communities and people.” As social determinants of health, food security and nutrition are central to the HiAP strategy, the Public Health Institute’s Guide for State and Local Governments provides an excellent platform to begin the process of adopting an HiAP approach. We also recommend considering a similar position to that of Fairfax County’s Health in All Policies Manager for greater coordination of data, collaborative practices, and strategic integration.

We request that the city implement an HiAP approach by incorporating health and wellness considerations into daily governance, administration, and programmatic work.

In the last ten years, the Capital Area Food Bank has distributed **8,260,968 meals** to food insecure clients in the City of Alexandria.