

ARLINGTON COUNTY 2022 Policy Agenda



For more than 42 years, the Capital Area Food Bank has served as the backbone of the region's hunger relief infrastructure. Throughout this time, we have responded to several crises—none more significant than COVID-19. In FY21, the Food Bank distributed 814,390 meals to food insecure clients in Arlington County. Based on prior experience and direct engagement with our clients and partners, the Food Bank expects to see elevated levels of need for years to come. The policy recommendations below represent practical and impactful interventions that can be enacted in 2022 to build upon our distribution efforts and reduce food insecurity among our 21,690 clients in the county.



Request Dillon Rule Legislation to Allow Localities in Commonwealth to Create Earned Income Tax Credit Programs

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.

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



Create a Full-Time Position or Workload to Synergize and Leverage Federal Resources and Programs

Arlington County has the lowest SNAP utilization rate of any jurisdiction in the Food Bank's service area in Northern Virginia, with just [30% of eligible individuals participating](#) in the program. This leaves an estimated \$22 million going unused annually. Similarly, [based on IRS data](#) and the [Commonwealth's EITC utilization rate](#), we estimate that nearly 2,200 county residents missed out on more than \$4.3 million total in 2018. After conversations with advocates, policymakers, governmental administrators, and clients, we believe the county 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 request that the county invest in a strategic and coordinated effort to strengthen inter-programmatic utilization efforts and increase participation in social safety net programs.

Based on a survey of 80 clients in Arlington County, 24 percent indicated that they were receiving no governmental social safety net benefits, whatsoever. This is the highest percentage of any other jurisdiction in the food bank's service area.



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 the consideration of 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 county 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
3,714,281 meals to food insecure clients
in Arlington County.



4900 Puerto Rico Ave, NE
Washington, DC 20017
202-644-9800

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