

# FAIRFAX 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 15,041,881 million meals to food insecure clients in Fairfax 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 86,990 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. In Fairfax County, nearly 51,000 low-income tax filers would receive credits to support the provision of necessities.

**We recommend the county include a request to the Virginia delegation for Dillon Rule legislation that would allow Fairfax 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

Fairfax 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 \$78 million going unused annually. Similarly, [based on IRS data](#) and the [commonwealth’s EITC utilization rate](#), we estimate that at least 14,000 county residents missed out on more than \$31.2 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.

Based on a survey of 230 clients in Fairfax County, 18 percent indicated that they were receiving no governmental social safety net benefits, whatsoever.

**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.**



## Prioritize Nutrition and Food Security in the County’s ‘Health in All Policies’ Approach

Fairfax County took an innovative step in implementing a “Health in All Policies” (HiAP) approach with the creation of [an HiAP Manager](#) position housed in the county’s health department. This position is tasked with integrating and articulating health considerations into policymaking in a holistic and cross-sector manner. As social determinants of health, food security and nutrition are central to the HiAP strategy. In collaboration with the HiAP Manager, Food Council, and other actors, we believe the county needs to more heavily incorporate food security in its adoption of HiAP.

**We ask that the county prioritize nutrition and food security in ongoing HiAP approaches.**



## Standardize and Incorporate Food Insecurity Metrics into Strategic Planning

The objectives and measures embedded in strategic planning are intended to monitor performance, increase accountability, and ultimately guide fiscal investments in programs and priorities. At the county level, the [Comprehensive Policy Plan](#) sets the direction and tone of policymakers as they create, track, prioritize, and respond to various measures and objectives for the betterment of residents throughout the county.

**We request that food security be integrated as an element to the plan, and we suggest that the county use our [Food Security Playbook](#) as a resource to identify various metrics for inclusion.**

In the last ten years, the Capital Area Food Bank has distributed  
**71,158,180 meals** to food insecure clients  
in Fairfax County.

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