

# REGIONAL 2022 Policy Agenda



The Capital Area Food Bank's service area spans five counties and one city across two states, as well as the District of Columbia. Each of these jurisdictions has its own deliberative bodies and governance structures, making it one of the most unique service regions of any food bank in the nation. Yet while the political and regulatory environments are varied, one thing remains constant in every ZIP code we serve: Food insecurity is affecting our community. Across the Washington metropolitan region, close to 448,500 individuals are facing hunger.

Regularly engaging with so many different jurisdictions facing a common issue enables us to learn from innovative and successful policy approaches throughout our service area. We can then advocate for the swift replication of those successes and innovations elsewhere in the region, or adapt and develop different models to meet different needs. Our policy priorities reflect many of these lessons and contain several recommendations, including those below, that span multiple geographies and levels of government.



## Increase Inter-Programmatic Utilization of the Social Safety Net

Across the region, many individuals qualify for a host of social welfare programs but are not receiving the benefits they need and deserve. This leaves thousands of people without access to necessities like food and healthcare, while millions of dollars go unused. Strategies to avoid such underutilization include enhancing interagency collaboration, updating information-sharing systems and practices, and more proactively identifying and communicating about programs with low public usage.

**We request all government actors in our region work toward the shared goal of increasing inter-programmatic utilization of social safety net programs.**



## Enhance SNAP

SNAP is one of the most efficient, effective, and equitable anti-hunger programs in history, designed to ease hardship and respond promptly to economic downturns. Recently, the federal government made its first major adjustment to the program's benefit calculation mechanism, the Thrifty Food Plan, since SNAP's inception in 1975. The reevaluation has resulted in a permanent [21% increase in benefits](#) for all participants. However, despite this permanent increase, temporary emergency allotments are set to sunset as the public health emergency ends, and [the average SNAP participant will lose \\$82 in monthly benefits](#). The Food Bank believes the economic impacts of the pandemic will far outlast the public health crisis, with low-income individuals and communities of color disproportionately affected.

**We request that lawmakers take critical measures to support, strengthen, and expand this program so that no member of our community has to worry about where their next meal is coming from.**



## Incorporate Food Security Metrics into Agency, County, and Comprehensive Planning

Every level of government has strategic guidelines in place. Including food security metrics in strategic guidelines can position policymakers to understand more fully hunger's multiple and intersectional causes; enable them to address these factors more comprehensively; and allow them to track the impacts and outcomes of intervention and resource allocation. We have created the [Food Security Playbook](#) as a guide to undertake this process.

**We request that elected leaders and policymakers incorporate the formal tracking and assessment of food security metrics into the work of programs and departments under their purview.**



### Expand or Create the Earned Income Tax Credit

One of the most powerful ways to alleviate food insecurity is through income support, and few programs deliver this support as effectively as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

**Based on the success of several EITC models in the region and throughout the country, we request that policymakers enact similar measures to provide low-income families with a greatly needed economic boost.**



### Emphasize Use of Local Agriculture in Food Security Efforts

Agriculture is a critical industry throughout our service area, yet thousands of people in our region are still facing hunger. A shift to a more sustainable, localized food system will leverage our region's agriculture to strengthen supply chains, build up local farms, and bring equity to consumption and access. This will provide long-term resilience to our food systems and hunger relief beyond times of crisis.

**We request that lawmakers and actors in our region recognize and prioritize the use of local agriculture in food security efforts.**

In the last ten years, the Capital Area Food Bank has distributed  
**415,314,827 meals** to food insecure clients  
in the Greater Washington region.



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