



Blue Ridge Area  
**FOOD BANK**  
Everyone should have enough to eat.



## The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank's 2025-2026 Public Policy Agenda

For more than 40 years, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank has been the backbone of central and western Virginia's charitable food assistance network. Last year, the Food Bank distributed more than 32 million pounds of food to neighbors—the most ever in our four decades of service.

Food banks like ours are struggling to meet the rising need for food assistance. In the Blue Ridge, 1 in 9 people is food insecure, and we serve, on average, 171,200 guests each month. This affects the health, education, and economic stability of our community. Government nutrition programs are vital and need to be made stronger.

Please join the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and our 400+ community partners in urging Congress to double down on our nation's commitment to end hunger by protecting and expanding vital food security programs.

### Policy priorities

- **Double USDA's TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) entitlement funding.** Ensure a steady supply of USDA foods and support U.S. agriculture.
- **Boost TEFAP infrastructure.** Increase annual funding to \$200 million for storage/distribution and reauthorize \$15 million for infrastructure grants.
- **Protect SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and Medicaid.** Safeguard benefits and strengthen nutrition programs in the Farm Bill.
- **Raise SNAP benefits for older adults.** Increase the minimum monthly benefit for adults age 60+ from \$23 to \$50.
- **Preserve SNAP's purchasing power.** Align benefits with grocery prices to reduce reliance on food banks.
- **Simplify SNAP enrollment.** Streamline access for seniors, students, immigrants, and low-wage workers.
- **Strengthen SNAP employment support.** Ensure participants receive adequate benefits while seeking work and expand effective training programs.
- **Expand Medicaid nutrition coverage.** Include food and nutrition services as a covered benefit.
- **Support Virginia's agricultural economy.** Highlight the role of local farmers in feeding our communities.

## Why these programs matter

- **TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program).** TEFAP is a cornerstone of food bank operations, providing 20%–25% of the food distributed by the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. It ensures a steady supply of nutritious, no-cost food for millions of Americans facing hunger. Here's why TEFAP is vital:
  - TEFAP is especially critical in rural areas, where 96% of counties received TEFAP food in 2020.
  - TEFAP provided \$399 million in food purchases nationwide in 2022.
  - TEFAP is funded through the Farm Bill, and we—alongside Feeding America—advocate for increased support to ensure reliability and meet rising demand.
- **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).** SNAP is the most efficient hunger-fighting program in the U.S., providing nine times more food than food banks. In Virginia, more than 800,000 people receive SNAP—but only 70% of eligible residents are enrolled. Among seniors, that number drops to 30%. We must simplify access, especially for rural and older neighbors.
  - Nearly half of SNAP recipients are children.
  - SNAP supports working families, seniors, and people with disabilities, especially during economic downturns and crises like COVID-19.
  - SNAP helps stabilize communities by supporting grocery stores, farmers, and food producers.
  - SNAP reduces pressure on food banks, allowing them to focus on emergency and supplemental support.

Learn more about [why the Farm Bill matters](#).

## Take action

- Join us in advocating for stronger food security programs.
- Share this document with your networks.
- Subscribe to our [Advocacy Alerts](#) for updates and advocacy opportunities.

## Additional links

Federal government (contact info)

- [U.S. Senate](#)
- [U.S. House of Representatives](#)

State government

- [Virginia elected officials and citizen engagement](#)

Advocacy partners

- [Feeding America](#)
- [Federation of Virginia Food Banks](#)

## About this document

This policy statement was developed by the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and reflects shared policy priorities with Feeding America and the Federation of Virginia Food Banks.

Questions or feedback? Contact CEO Kari Diener at [CEO@brafb.org](mailto:CEO@brafb.org).