



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



The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank's 2026-2027 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 33 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 3 households is food insecure, and we serve, on average, 178,700 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 300+ 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. Specifically, we ask Congress to provide:
 - \$450 million appropriated for TEFAP food purchases, and
 - An additional \$500 million per year authorized funding in the farm bill for TEFAP food purchases.
- **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 next Farm Bill.
- **Raise SNAP benefits for older adults.** Increase the minimum monthly benefit for adults age 60+ from \$23 to \$75.
- **Preserve SNAP's purchasing power.** Align benefits with grocery prices to reduce reliance on food banks.
- **Simplify SNAP enrollment and application process.** Make it easier to apply for, especially for seniors, students, immigrants, and workers with low wages. Streamline multi program processes to combine WIC, SNAP, and Medicaid applications and connections.
- **Strengthen SNAP employment support.** Ensure participants receive adequate benefits while seeking work and expand effective training programs and qualifying college programs per federal guidelines.
- **Strengthen partnerships with schools** to connect more eligible families to SNAP, increasing access to nutrition assistance, while expanding automatic eligibility for Virginia

SUN Bucks and other child nutrition 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.
- **Advocate for funding on the Federal (Farm Bill) and at the State level to support local and regional food procurement.**

Why these programs matter

- **TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program).** TEFAP remains a cornerstone of the emergency food system, helping move nutritious food from American farms and producers to families living with facing hunger. Increasing TEFAP funding would enable the USDA to purchase more U.S.-grown foods and distribute them through food banks nationwide. TEFAP is a vital and steady source of no-cost food to Blue Ridge Area Food Bank partners who operate on highly constrained budgets.

Here's why TEFAP is vital:

- TEFAP is funded through the Farm Bill, and we—alongside Feeding America—advocate for increased support to ensure reliability and meet rising demand.
 - Farmers are vital to strong communities. Food banks partner with local producers to keep food grown in America within our communities through programs like The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), powering regional agriculture and local economies.
 - When USDA purchases more U.S.-grown foods through programs like TEFAP, it creates stable, guaranteed markets for farmers while helping producers weather supply chain disruptions, rising costs and market uncertainty.
 - These purchases strengthen rural communities by supporting local economies and improving access to nutritious food in areas that often experience higher food insecurity and have fewer grocery options.
 - Despite growing need, federal food purchases have declined. Pounds of TEFAP food flowing through the Feeding America network are projected to drop by about 25% from federal fiscal year 2025 to fiscal year 2026, resulting in the loss of roughly 270 million meals annually.
 - Strengthening TEFAP ensures farmers have reliable markets while food banks have the resources needed to keep shelves stocked for families facing hunger.
- **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).** SNAP is the most efficient hunger-fighting program in the U.S., providing 9X more food than food banks. In Virginia, more than 700,000 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. Every \$1 of SNAP spent in a community generates \$1.54 in the local economy.
 - 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.

Updated October 19, 2026