



Blue Ridge Area

FOOD BANK

Everyone should have enough to eat.



Updated October 28, 2024

The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank's 2024 Public Policy Agenda

[Urge Congress to Protect and Strengthen Hunger-relief Programs in the 2023 Farm Bill](#)

For more than 40 years the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank has been the backbone of the region's charitable food assistance network. Last year the Food Bank distributed more than 31 million pounds of food to neighbors who needed it—the most ever in our four decades of service. However, food banks like ours are struggling to keep up with the need for food assistance. Government nutrition programs for children, families and senior citizens are vital and need to be improved and expanded.

Please join the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and our partners in urging your Members of Congress to double down on our nation's commitment to end hunger by strengthening and protecting America's most important food security programs in the next farm bill.

Specifically, Congress should:

- **Authorize and increase mandatory funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) food purchases to \$500 million annually.** This would double the annual amount of funding for TEFAP entitlement commodities. The new level would ensure a steady flow of TEFAP foods to food programs like food banks and support the US agricultural economy.
- **Reauthorize and increase to \$200 million per year funding for TEFAP storage and distribution and reauthorize \$15 million for TEFAP infrastructure grants.** These funds are essential for food banks to cover expenses related to storing and transporting USDA foods, including costs for refrigeration and fuel.
- **Ensure SNAP's purchasing power remains strong** so that benefits align with grocery prices and provide adequate support during tough economic times. This will decrease the need for charitable food assistance, helping to reduce the strain on food banks.
- **Streamline SNAP eligibility and enrollment** to improve access for older adults, college students, immigrants, and low-wage workers. Current eligibility rules and enrollment processes are complicated and confusing.
- **Strengthen SNAP to better assist individuals seeking employment.** Congress can help SNAP participants find work by supporting effective state employment and training programs and ensuring people receive adequate SNAP benefits while job searching.

[Our policymakers need to hear your voice of support for the next farm bill.](#)

Together, we can make our voices heard and urge our elected leaders to strengthen and protect critical food security programs, which so many of our neighbors rely on.

About these public programs

The Emergency Food Assistance Program moves food from farms to food banks to families facing hunger.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP; formerly called food stamps) is the most efficient hunger-fighting program in the country and provides 10 times the amount of food as food banks provide. We need your help to make sure our elected leaders improve SNAP at a time when food banks and community pantries are stretched to the limit. Currently, about 800,000 Virginians receive SNAP benefits, but many more are eligible. Only 70% of those who are eligible actually receive benefits, and among seniors, that number drops to about 30%. We can and should make SNAP easier to understand and apply for, especially for our rural and senior neighbors.

Please deepen your commitment to ending hunger and advocate. Take action today by contacting Congress.

[Tell Congress: Pass a strong farm bill to help farmers and people facing hunger with TEFAP and SNAP.](#)

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. We encourage interested stakeholders to share this document with their networks.

We also welcome feedback or questions from policymakers. Please share your thoughts with Blue Ridge Area Food Bank CEO Michael McKee at CEO@brafb.org.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

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

STATE GOVERNMENT

- [Senate of Virginia](#)
- [The Virginia House of Delegates](#)

ADVOCACY PARTNERS

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

To learn why the farm bill is important, watch this video:

<https://youtu.be/T8mm12IFljc>

To learn how TEFAP, funded through the farm bill, affects this food bank, watch this video: <https://youtu.be/LIJQGcgUrM>

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