2021 VIRGINIA NUTRITION SECURITY SUMMIT

Heidi Hertz, MS, RD
Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry
Hitting the Road..

- Virginia is leading the way
- The Commonwealth’s food program response to COVID-19 continues.
- We have much to celebrate.
- There is more to do.
Governor’s Children’s Cabinet

Established by Executive Order 11

- Chaired by First Lady of Virginia Pamela Northam

Members:
Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring
Secretary of Education Atif Qarni
Secretary of Health and Human Resources Dr. Daniel Carey
Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran
Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax.

4 priority areas: Early Childhood Development and School Readiness, Nutrition and Food Security, Trauma-Informed Care, Student Safety.
Nutrition and Food Security Goals

Virginia children have consistent, reliable access to healthy foods

Goal: Expand access to nutritious food and decrease food insecurity for children

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Goal: Promote community-based food systems to increase access to healthy, local foods
Stakeholder working group

• Includes representatives from:

American Academy of Pediatrics  Richmond Food Justice Alliance  Virginia Department of Social Services
American Heart Association  School Nutrition Association of Virginia  Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
Arcadia Center for Sustainable Agriculture  Tricycle  Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth
Boys and Girls Club  Virginia Academy of Pediatrics  Virginia Fresh Match
Charlottesville Food Justice Network  Virginia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  Virginia League of Social Services
Community Unity in Action  Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom  Executives
Farmers Market.co  Virginia Cooperative Extension  Virginia No Kid Hungry
Federation of Virginia Food Banks  Virginia Department of Aging and Virginia Poverty Law
Greater Richmond Fit4Kids  Rehabilitation Services  Virginia State University
Local Environmental Agriculture Project  Virginia Department of Agriculture and Virginia Tech
PB&J Fund  Consumer Services
Shalom Farms  Virginia Department of Education

• Work group spends time sharing best practice strategies, discussing outcomes, and prioritizing items for the Children’s Cabinet.
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Food Security in Virginia

**Increased need for food assistance**

- 150,000 more food-insecure Virginians
- 81.2% of adults receiving SNAP benefits reported being food insecure.
- Virginia food bank distributions increased 30%

**Participation in federal nutrition programs increased**

- 11.66% increase in SNAP participation in Feb 2020 compared to 2019
  - SNAP participation peaked at 785,411 in July 2020.
- 11% increase in WIC participation in Feb 2020 compared to 2019
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virginia’s United Response to COVID-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Families</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SNAP expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• HeadStart benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• P-EBT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• WIC expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monthly Child Tax Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Nutrition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School meals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child and Adult Care Food Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seamless Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many waivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency Assistance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We Care box program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Farmers to Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Farm to Food Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Distribution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TEFAP- The Emergency Food Assistance Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CSFP- Commodity Supplemental Food Program</td>
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</tbody>
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Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger

- Launched in October 2020, first of its kind unified set of goals and strategies prioritizing food security
  - Led by the Children’s Cabinet, Federation of Virginia Food Banks, Virginia Department of Social Services
  - Incorporated input from townhalls

- Identifies the greatest opportunities to reduce food insecurity in Virginia and critical next steps to developing policies, programs, and partnerships

- Emphasizes the importance of federal, state, and local policies and programs being in authentic partnerships with grassroots organizations
Roadmap Goals

- Expand Child Nutrition Programs
- Increase Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women Infant and Children (WIC) Program
- Increase Nutrition Support for Seniors
- Grow Access to Local Food for Schools and Families
- Strengthen Connections Between Food Access Programs and the Healthcare Sector
- Encourage Food and Agriculture Investments in Food Deserts and Marginalized Communities
- Amplify Public Awareness of Hunger in Virginia and Support Information Sharing Across Public and Private Sectors
- Support Community organizing to combat food insecurity and hunger
Working together - we have made progress

School nutrition
• HB 5113 (summer 2020) Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for schools and divisions
• HB 2135 (2021) Afterschool Meal Programs

Families
• HB 1820 (2021) Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility

Local agriculture
• HB 1509 (2020) VA Food Access Investment Program
• HB 2203, SB 1188 (2021) VA Agriculture Food Assistance Program

Healthcare
• HB 2065 (2021) pilot Produce Rx Program
The Roads We Have Traveled...

Partner with the private sector to increase access to locally produced, healthy food for low-income individuals

- Coordinate investment in small businesses and community development projects in underserved neighborhoods, which could include food hubs, logistics companies, and food incubators/small batch manufacturing, and others.
- Invest in innovative food retail strategies through the Virginia Food Access Investment Programs and fund other economic development opportunities.
- Utilize Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD) and similar strategies to create economic opportunities in food and agriculture, healthy neighborhoods, and build community assets, pride, and power by and with historically marginalized communities.

Establish the Virginia Agriculture Surplus System (VASS)

- Facilitate the donation of local food crops to the Federation of Virginia Food Banks through the provision of a safe, efficient system, which allows for the reimbursement of farmers for costs incurred in the process of harvesting, packaging and/or processing foods intended for donation.

Improve participation in Suppemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program

EXPAND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Ensure the availability of at least one Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) afterschool meal/snack opportunity in all eligible localities.

- Through outreach initiatives and technical assistance, ensure each school division with at least one eligible school participates in CACFP Afterschool Meal/ Snack Programs.
- Assist schools and community organizations in establishing programs, expanding access, and the established CACFP goal.
- Utilize healthy food incentives to increase consumer purchasing power so individuals and families with tight food budgets can bring home more fruits and vegetables.

Sustain funding support for nutrition programs provided by Virginia’s food banks.

Ensure all schools with a 50% Identified Student Percentage (ISP) or higher participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

- Provide targeted outreach and technical assistance by the Virginia Department of Education in partnership with No Kid Hungry and the Virginia Poverty Law Center to include providing in-depth financial analysis and expanding partnerships with community stakeholders.

Remove financial barriers to school meal access

- Eliminate the reduced-price meal category to ensure all low-income families have access to school meals at no cost.
- Explore other measures to reduce the burden of school meal debt, including advances, grants, or loans to make meals free.

Ensure the availability of at least one Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) afterschool meal/snack opportunity in all eligible localities.
One year later

Roadmap to End Hunger Update

- Documents the economic impact and state/federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Recognizes the successes which have advanced our Roadmap strategies
- Outlines the path forward to eliminating food insecurity in Virginia.