



Ensuring that Virginians have Access to Regular, Nutritious Meals

In a Commonwealth and a country as rich in resources as ours, there is no reason that a single Virginian should go to bed hungry. Feeding America, the nationwide network of food banks, projects that in addition to the more than 800,000 Virginians already experiencing food insecurity, 270,000¹ more may face food insecurity at some point in the next year due to COVID-19, which makes our mission that much more urgent. Virginia can and must work in partnership with the federal government, local governments, school divisions and nonprofit organizations like food banks to strengthen the nutrition safety net and make strategic investments in marginalized communities. Every missed meal is a threat to the future prosperity of the Commonwealth.

As Virginia's 72nd Governor and First Lady, Terry and Dorothy McAuliffe made ending childhood hunger a key priority of the administration. As a result of increased funding and the administration's partnership with No Kid Hungry, nearly 13 million more school meals were served per year in Virginia. This is tremendous progress, but there is much work to be done. In the 2018-2019 school year, about 38% of free and reduced students were still missing out on school breakfast each day². Additionally, only 15% of free and reduced students benefited from summer meal programs, and less than 5% received after-school meals³.

As Virginia's next governor, Terry will work tirelessly to ensure that Virginians have access to regular, nutritious meals by expanding participation in federal child nutrition programs, growing access to local foods, strengthening "food as medicine" programs, and establishing a Food

¹Hake, M., E. Engelhard, A. Dewey, C. Gundersen (2020). The Impact of the Coronavirus on Food Insecurity [Brief series]. Available from Feeding America: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/coronavirus-hunger-research>

²"Poverty, Hunger, Health, and Federal Nutrition Programs: A Profile of the Southern Region." Food Research & Action Center, July 2020, frac.org/wp-content/uploads/FRAC-Poverty-Hunger-Health-and-the-Federal-Nutrition-Programs-2020.pdf.

³"Poverty, Hunger, Health, and Federal Nutrition Programs: A Profile of the Southern Region." Food Research & Action Center, July 2020, frac.org/wp-content/uploads/FRAC-Poverty-Hunger-Health-and-the-Federal-Nutrition-Programs-2020.pdf.

Security Council for the Commonwealth. By adopting and building upon the recommendations of the ‘Roadmap to End Hunger’ released in October 2020 by Governor Northam and the Federation of Virginia Food Banks, Terry's plan will get healthy food into the hands of people who need it now, while addressing the long-term equity issues that have made communities of color significantly more likely to struggle with food insecurity.

As governor, Terry will:

Expand participation in federal child nutrition programs. Virginia continues to leave tens of millions of dollars on the table because we are not maximizing participation in federal nutrition programs. Growing from 62% to 70% participation in school breakfast programs alone would bring more than \$10 million in federal funds into the Commonwealth each year and help us feed thousands more children. At only 15% participation in summer meals and just 5% participation in after school meal programs, we have much room to grow in out-of-school programs as well⁴. Students can’t be hungry to learn if they are just plain hungry, and we can’t have the best schools in the world if we can’t meet the basic needs of our students. As governor, Terry will help school nutrition departments successfully implement proven distribution models like Breakfast After the Bell and At-risk Afterschool Meals. He will work to build meal programs into Virginia’s Standards of Quality so that every student in need has access to regular, nutritious meals. Terry will also build on successful public-private partnerships that support the work of food banks and other nonprofits to reach children when they are out of school through summer meals, weekend backpacks, and school-based pantry programs.

Grow access to local foods. Agriculture is Virginia’s largest private sector industry, but more than one million of our neighbors will struggle with food insecurity this year.⁵ As governor, Terry will pursue a comprehensive “Virginia Food for Virginia Families” agenda to connect some of the world’s highest quality agricultural products to more families in need. These initiatives will promote the health and wellbeing of our families by improving access to nutritious foods while supporting the bottom lines of our hardworking farmers and strengthening our regional food system. Terry’s administration will prioritize the growth of local agriculture markets by supporting our Farm to School initiative, the Virginia Agriculture Food Assistance program through our food banks, double SNAP incentive programs, and WIC and Senior Farmers Market programs.

Strengthen ‘Food as Medicine’ programs. Research has demonstrated that good nutrition supports better health outcomes. Children in food insecure households are twice as likely to be in fair or poor health compared to children in food secure households⁶.

⁴ “Poverty, Hunger, Health, and Federal Nutrition Programs: A Profile of the Southern Region.” Food Research & Action Center, July 2020, frac.org/wp-content/uploads/FRAC-Poverty-Hunger-Health-and-the-Federal-Nutrition-Programs-2020.pdf.

⁵ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/virginia>

⁶ Cook JT , Frank DA , Levenson SM , Neault NB , Heeren TC , Black MM , et al. Child food insecurity increases risks posed by household food insecurity to young children’s health . J Nutr . 2006 ; 136 (4): 1073 – 6 . [Crossref](#), [Medline](#), [Google Scholar](#)

Terry's administration will take a holistic and systems-oriented approach to addressing the social determinants of health, including food security. Terry will direct the Virginia Department of Health to evaluate the success of the statewide implementation of the Unite Us platform, and work with the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association to establish social determinant screening capabilities across all systems of care. While we build infrastructure to identify and refer in the clinic setting, we must also invest in the capacity of service providers across the state to act on referrals and provide a level of support that is in alignment with the patient's health plan.

Establish a Food Security Council. As Governor, Terry will establish an interagency Food Security Council, including the Commonwealth's Chief Data Officer, focused on data sharing systems, research, promoting best practices, and engaging community organizations to achieve the goals laid out in the Roadmap to End Hunger. The Food Security Council will be charged with identifying barriers to participation in SNAP, WIC, and other federal nutrition programs, and implementing solutions to improve access and participation.