



BRIDGING THE NUTRITIONAL DIVIDE

The COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL ON BRIDGING THE NUTRITIONAL DIVIDE, chaired by the First Lady, was formed by Executive Order 34 in November 2014. The Council forged partnerships across the Governor’s cabinet, the legislature, state and local agencies, national, regional, and local non-profits, schools and private business to close the nutritional divide and improve food access and the Virginia food system.

The Council made significant progress towards ending childhood hunger in Virginia by increasing participation in the existing federal nutrition programs, improving access to affordable, healthy and local agriculture, and leveraging partnerships to develop community-driven strategies to increase food access, health, education and agriculture.

In 2016, the Council worked with the Federation of Virginia Food Banks and other stakeholders to pass the Virginia Food Crop Donation Tax Credit, which establishes an individual income tax credit for farmers who donate a portion of their harvests to nonprofit food banks. The credit is an incentive for farmers to donate excess or imperfect agricultural products so that fresh local and nutritious Virginia food can be more readily available to families in need.

The Council has also rallied support for improved food access through proposed legislation which would create a Virginia Grocery Investment Fund. The Fund will support grocery store development in food deserts, resulting in new and retained jobs, as well as increased access to healthful food in communities in need across Virginia.

In May 2017, the First Lady and Council launched the VIRGINIA FOOD ACCESS NETWORK, which is an online resource designed to support and facilitate collaboration between organizations working on childhood hunger and food insecurity. Through the site, community groups have access to geo-spatial data mapping, toolkits, and peer mentorship they need to maximize their impact.

To highlight partnerships across the food system, and underscore the Council’s ongoing work of bringing the Council mission to local communities, Virginia held its first ever FEED VIRGINIA DAY OF ACTION in September 2017. Community partners across the Commonwealth hosted 87 events connecting volunteers with action opportunities, celebrating service and taking action against hunger.

*On the 2017 DAY OF ACTION,
over 1077 schools from 71 school divisions
provided breakfast at no cost, reaching
over 310,000 students.*