

SUPPORT SB1525 & HB2445 AND PREVENT FOOD WASTE



I am Melody Jeffrey, the former Garden Coordinator for Nimmo United Methodist Church Community Garden. For the last two years, I have worked with Jane Cullipher of Cullipher Farms to help distribute their extra produce and wholesome foods such as baked goods and bread to our community. Our church, Nimmo United Methodist Church is centrally located making it convenient for Cullipher to drop off, and for organizations to pick up. We already had relationships with many organizations which facilitated distribution. Last year we distributed over 11,000 pounds of wholesome foods! We were able to supply 15 different organizations including our own Nimmo Garden Pantry, a local women's shelter, Judeo-Christian Outreach Center, senior apartments and other food pantries. Working with local farmers is an excellent, cost-effective ministry that helps us connect with our community and work toward sustainability.



Society of St. Andrew

GLEANING AMERICA'S FIELDS FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY

Society of St. Andrew relies on these tax credits as an incentive for increasing our number of farmers and therefore increasing the amount of produce to people that can't afford healthy, nutritious food. By including wholesome food, many more providers would be willing to give. Virginians who are in need would have a more rounded and healthy diet.



My name is Kip Poole and I'm the Executive Director/Founder of The CROP Foundation and former Executive Chef for Commune Restaurant Group. Over the last 4 years, we have worked with local farmers such as Crowells, Culliphers, Flannagans, etc. and utilized over 50,000 lbs. of local produce into our menus. Currently working on a project to educate low-income families the importance of healthy cooking, we will be taking the "wasted" donated produce from farms and turning them into processed and nutritional meals for families in need. Passing this bill will not only assist farmers but it will assist with educating our youth and assisting our community.



The Farmlink Project is a student-founded non-profit with an innovative solution to combat food waste, food insecurity, improving nutrition, and reducing landfill disposal benefiting the climate. To date, we have rescued over 100 million pounds of surplus produce and delivered to communities in need across the United States, specifically in VA Farmlink has delivered approximately 200,000 pounds of surplus produce to people in need. The Farmlink Project was founded in April 2020 when COVID-19 halted the commercial food industry, food insecure demand was larger than ever, and millions of pounds of fresh produce sat on farms with nowhere to go. However, neither food waste nor food insecurity are products of the pandemic, today, 35 million Americans are food insecure, while 11-15 billion pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables go to waste each year at farms alone. That's why our purpose at The Farmlink Project is larger than the amount of pounds rescued. The Farmlink Project's purpose is to build solutions that make the USA's abundance of nutritious food accessible for everyone.

With Farmlink's purpose in mind, The Farmlink Project is proud to support SB1525, which addresses the root causes of food waste and food insecurity at the state level. SB1525 will help encourage donations to The Farmlink Project from growers across Virginia and set the precedent for other states to renew and implement more incentives for growers across the nation. By renewing the tax incentive for farmers, clarifying the "wholesome food" terminology, and increasing the amount each individual can claim while utilizing fair market value, we see the positive impact that this legislation would have not only on The Farmlink Project's daily operations, but on food insecure communities across the state of Virginia.



The proposed bill in question to extend and renew the tax credit for farmers has many positive repercussions, and not only directly to the farmers but all the various levels of the people and systems involved in the food chain process.

At Drishti Compost, we are not only chefs, but farmers and business owners. We see first hand the sheer volume of food and other organic waste that would otherwise be thrown in plastic bags and sent to the ever-growing landfill. If farmers and restaurant owners have a better incentive to gather, allocate, and donate their surplus foods, then we alleviate a large carbon-contributing step in the current “waste” process. The food donation process also introduces common-interest businesses and people with one another, enhancing smart purchasing choices and creating more efficient systems. For example, my business purchasing local spinach from farmers in Pungo, who grow their spinach in the organic compost we make in Pungo, from food waste gathered at Oceanfront restaurants. This is how you close the food loop - and we all met each other by having conversations about topics exactly like the bill in discussion here.

This legislation helps to push us all farther away from a problem and closer to a smarter, greener solution.