



Dear Fellow Co-workers,

In this week of Thanksgiving, I give thanks for your presence last Wednesday in the Douglas Wilder Library. Pastor David Chapman's prayer and beginning words expressed the heart of our work: taking seriously the reality of hungry children in our commonwealth, with parents who love them, who may even deny themselves food due to social stigma, and who are in reality future strong leaders within this commonwealth.

We were a group of 65 leaders from across the commonwealth with many gifts, many networks, many programs of care and concern for hungry children. We came from many diverse communities which was wonderful for our hungry children come from all of them as well.

We spoke to a common advocacy, proposed the beginning framework for a bill for a commonwealth wide universal breakfast program. We were helpfully warned about the devil in the details, and we began a group to contact legislators. We began a group to create a white paper providing the summary of our intent and arguments for why this bill should be passed. We are seeking persons from legislative services that will help us with the financial, practical details of the bill. We will be seeking to make contact with major professional networks within the commonwealth receiving their insights, advice, and hopefully their support.

We are coming back December 16 as a time for reporting back from these different directions.

Meanwhile, the same children are still wondering about the amount and quality of any food available for them today. The governor last year said there were 321,000 such children in the commonwealth. The American Community Survey looking at states by median household income ranked Virginia as the 7th highest state in the union. It ranks Virginia 5th by per capita income. Maryland, which ranked first in median household income and second in per capita income has approved a form of universal breakfast for their state.

In a non-partisan, diverse way, we should strive to feed and educate our future leaders.

I pray for you a Thanksgiving Day with the blessings of family, safety, food, and joy. May we continue to work together for all families of our commonwealth to know this as well tonight.

Blessings to you and thank you for this growing partnership,

Bishop Jim Mauney
Virginia Synod, ELCA