

March 4, 2022

Mr. Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to thank you for [supporting](#) in your FY 2022 Budget the full repeal of the [lifetime ban on individuals with a past felony drug conviction from receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#) and urge you to again call for full repeal of this harmful ban in your FY 2023 Budget to the Congress. We also urge you to support in your FY 2023 Budget a full repeal of the **lifetime ban on individuals with a past felony drug conviction from receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**.

In 1996, Congress imposed a lifetime ban on individuals convicted of a drug felony from receiving SNAP and/or TANF. Although Congress gave states the ability to opt-out as part of the 1996 ban, [many states](#) still bar individuals and impose onerous and costly requirements that create barriers to restoring assistance. The drug felony bans on SNAP and TANF imposed by Congress undermine efforts by individuals striving to transition successfully into the community and provide for their families.

SNAP and TANF assistance provide a minimal, supplemental amount of support during times of financial hardship, including now during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals and families who qualify for SNAP and TANF are low income, generally living below 200% the poverty line. SNAP provides monthly benefits to help buy food, and access to work-based learning, vocational services, and support services via SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T). States receive federal TANF block grant funds to provide assistance in [various forms](#), including income assistance (such as wage supplements for working-poor families), childcare, education and job training, transportation, aid to children at risk of abuse and neglect and a variety of other services. This assistance is essential for reducing recidivism rates and rebuilding communities and families.

Even in ordinary times, formerly incarcerated people are confronted with too many legal barriers and other disqualifications as a result of a criminal conviction and are far more likely to experience unemployment because of a criminal record. Newly released Bureau of Justice Statistics [data](#) indicates that jobless rates among formerly incarcerated people have not improved as the economy has begun to recover. In addition, the ability of community-based providers to assist people transitioning to society with basic needs has been compromised by high demand for services and the pandemic. Preventing formerly incarcerated individuals from accessing vital SNAP and TANF assistance makes pathways to prosperity much harder to secure.

Policing and drug law enforcement activity is typically concentrated in low-income communities of color, resulting in higher drug-related conviction and incarceration rates for Black and Brown people, as well as the disproportionate impact of policies such as the lifetime ban on SNAP and TANF assistance on people of color. African American adults are almost [5 times](#) more likely to be incarcerated than whites in state prisons. Latinos are 1.3 times [more likely](#). Women are also [more likely](#) to be incarcerated for drug crimes - 25 percent of women and only 14 percent of men in state prison have been convicted of a drug offense. Women also [comprise](#) the vast majority of recipients for SNAP and TANF, which means we are punishing mothers who have already served their time by imposing this lifetime ban on critical food and other basic forms of assistance. Given the Biden-Harris Administration's [stated commitment](#) to advance equity and opportunity to communities of color, and other historically marginalized and underserved communities, it is vital that your FY23 Budget call for repealing both the SNAP and TANF bans.

Restoring access to SNAP and TANF assistance is an essential step to help provide basic support, such as food, to individuals and [families with children](#). Families receive a much lower overall benefit when a parent is ineligible for SNAP/TANF as a result of a drug felony conviction. This means that families with an adult who is banned from benefits have access to less food and support, resulting in food insecurity and increased stress that can lead to preventable health problems for both adults and children. Food insecurity is also pervasive among people transitioning from the criminal legal system. One study found that [91 percent](#) of individuals suffer from food insecurity upon release. A second study concluded that more than [70 percent](#) of those on probation experienced food insecurity.

Lifting the ban and reinstating SNAP and TANF for those with past drug convictions would immediately remove this barrier that exacerbates hunger and poverty for low-income individuals and families. Lifting the SNAP/TANF ban would also enable individuals to focus on securing employment, housing and other essentials rather than locating food and other basic needs for themselves and dependents.

As organizations working to solve hunger and poverty, and advance justice reform, civil and human rights, and supports for individuals transitioning from the criminal legal system, **we urge you to prioritize lifting the ban on SNAP and TANF for those with prior drug convictions in your FY 2023 Budget to the Congress.** Please contact Grant Smith, Deputy Director of the Office of National Affairs with Drug Policy Alliance, at gsmith@drugpolicy.org, or José Santos Woss, Director for Justice Reform with Friends Committee on National Legislation, at Jose@fcnl.org, for questions about this letter or to discuss this request.

Thank you for considering.

Sincerely,

Alabama Arise (AL)

A Little Piece of Light (NY)

Advent Backpack Blessings (SC)

Advocating Opportunity (OH, TN)
AIDS Foundation Chicago (IL)
AIDS United*
Alliance to End Hunger*
American Humanist Association*
American Public Health Association*
Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition (WA)
Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance (AR)
Atlanta Community Food Bank (GA)
Barnwell Non-Profit Roundtable (SC)
Berkeley Food Network (CA)
Black Leadership Council, an Initiative of PRC (CA)
Bread for the World*
California Association of Food Banks (CA)
CAN-DO Foundation (CA)
CAP OC/OC Food Bank (CA)
Center for Disability Rights*
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)*
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)*
Center for Living and Learning (CA)
Center for Popular Democracy*
Center for Responsible Lending*
Center for Employment Opportunities: CEO*
Changing Faces Inc. (GA)
Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy (NC)
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (IL)
Children's Defense Fund*
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice*

Chrysalis (CA)
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office*
Church World Service*
Citizens Action Coalition of IN (IN)
Coalfield Development (WV)
Coalition on Human Needs*
College & Community Fellowship (NY)
Colorado Center on Law and Policy (CO)
Colorado Children's Campaign (CO)
Community Fresh Start of Upstate (SC)
Community Initiatives Inc. (SC)
Community Legal Services of Philadelphia (PA)
CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants)*
Cure Violence Global*
D.C. Hunger Solutions (D.C.)
Down Home NC (NC)
Drug Policy Alliance*
Empower Missouri (MO)
Equality California (CA)
Every Texan (TX)
Fair and Just Prosecution*
FedCURE*
Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin (WI)
Feeding Indiana's Hungry (IN)
Feeding Texas (TX)
Feeding Wisconsin (WI)
Fenway Health (MA)
First Focus on Children*

Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano (CA)
Food Bank of Northern Indiana (IN)
Food Bank of Northern Nevada (NV)
Food Equity Action Board (SC)
Food for People (CA)
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)*
FoodShare South Carolina (SC)
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (NY)
Friends Committee on National Legislation*
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (GA)
GLIDE (CA)
GLM2 Foundation, Inc. (GA)
Greater Boston Legal Services (MA)
Greater Chicago Food Depository (IL)
Greater Hartford Legal Aid (CT)
Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger (PA)
Greenville SC Food Equity Action Board (SC)
HANA Center (IL)
Harm Reduction Ohio (OH)
Hazel Crest Community UMC Food Pantry (IL)
Healing Equity and Liberation (HEAL)*
HEALing Partners/Wholespire Coalition (SC)
Health Alliance for Violence Intervention*
Health in Justice Action Lab (MA)
Homeless Persons Representation Project (MD)
Homeward Bound of Marin (CA)
Hunger Action Los Angeles (CA)
Hunger Free Vermont (VT)

Hunger Solutions Minnesota (MN)
Hunger Solutions New York (NY)
Hunger Task Force (WI)
Hunger-Free Oregon (OR)
Immigrant Welcome Center (IN)
Indiana Public Health Association (IN)
Indy Hunger Network (IN)
Jewish Council for Public Affairs*
Juma Ventures*
Just Future Project*
Just Harvest (PA)
JustLeadershipUSA*
Juvenile Law Center (PA)
Kansas Action for Children (KS)
Kentucky Center for Economic Policy (KY)
Keys2Work (IN)
Law Enforcement Action Partnership*
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley (CA)
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights*
Legal Action Center*
LiveWell Greenville (SC)
LiveWell Kershaw Coalition (SC)
Loaves & Fishes (SC)
Los Angeles Community Action Network (CA)
Los Angeles LGBT Center (CA)
Louisiana Budget Project (LA)
Love Huntsville (AL)
Lowcountry Food Bank (SC)

Lowcountry Street Grocery (SC)
Maine Council of Churches (ME)
Maine Drug Policy Lab at Colby College (ME)
Maryland Hunger Solutions (MD)
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MA)
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger*
Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc. (IN)
Mental Health America of SC (SC)
Metropolitan Family Services (IL)
Michigan League for Public Policy (MI)
Mile High WorkShop (CO)
Montana Food Bank Network (MT)
Mother Hubbard's Cupboard (IN)
Movement for Family Power*
Musicians for Overdose Prevention (NC)
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)*
National Action Network*
National Alliance of Trauma Recovery Centers (CA)
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers*
National Center for Lesbian Rights*
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable*
National Women's Law Center*
NC Council of Churches (NC)
National Center for Advocacy and Recovery for Behavioral Health*
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest (NE)
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice*
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies*
New Hampshire Hunger Solutions, Inc. (NH)

New Jersey Harm Reduction Coalition (NJ)
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty (NM)
New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NY)
New York Legal Assistance Group (NY)
NJ Poor People's Campaign (NJ)
NJ State Industrial Union Council (NJ)
Northern Illinois Food Bank (IL)
Northwest Harvest (WA)
Nourish California (CA)
NYC Employment and Training Coalition (NY)
Ohio Association of Foodbanks (OH)
Opportunity Youth United*
Orion Industries (WA)
Pack Away Hunger (IN)
PAL: Play. Advocate. Live Well. (SC)
Per Scholas (NY)
Phillis Wheatley Community Center (SC)
Pleasant Valley Connection (SC)
Praise Tabernacle Deliverance Outreach (SC)
Preble Street Maine Hunger Initiative (ME)
RecycleForce (IN)
REDF San Francisco (CA)
Reframe Health and Justice*
Reimagining Justice Inc/Paterson Healing Collective (NJ)
RESULTS*
Roca, Inc. (MA)
Safer Foundation (IL, IA)
Salvation and Social Justice (NJ)

San Diego Hunger Coalition (CA)
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank (CA)
Savannah River ROC (SC)
SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center (SC)
SC Poor People's Campaign (SC)
SC Thrive (SC)
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley (CA)
Second Helpings (IN)
Shriver Center on Poverty Law (IL)
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change*
Silver State Equality (NV)
Skid Row People's Market (CA)
Slater Marietta Community Association (SC)
Snapdragon Consulting & Advocacy (IN)
South Carolina Interfaith Power & Light (SC)
St. Mary's Center (CA)
Statewide Poverty Action Network (WA)
Step Up Savannah (GA)
StoptheDrugWar.org*
Take on Wall Street*
Tennessee Justice Center (TN)
The Community Based Public Safety Collective (NJ)
The Daniel Initiative*
The Festival Center (DC)
The Gubbio Project (CA)
The Human Trafficking Prevention Project (MD)
The Latin American Association (GA)
The Newark Community Street Team (NJ)

The Sentencing Project*

The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society*

The Women's Building (CA)

Transgender Law Center*

Treatment Action Group*

Treatment Communities of America*

Unitarian Universalist Association*

United Church of Christ Justice and Local Church Ministries*

United Housing Connections & The Upstate CoC (SC)

URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity*

URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America (RI)

Utahns Against Hunger (UT)

UTEC Inc. (MA)

Vermont Legal Aid (VT)

Virginia Poverty Law Center (VA)

VV Spot (SC)

Western Center on Law and Poverty (CA)

William E. Morris Institute for Justice (AZ)

Women's Fund of Omaha (NE)

*= Denotes a national organization.