



February 28, 2023

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
and Forestry
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Glenn “G.T.” Thompson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
and Forestry
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman and Ranking Member Scott,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge that you repeal the [lifetime ban](#) on individuals with a past felony drug conviction from receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as part of the next Farm Bill.

SNAP and TANF provide minimal, supplemental support during times of financial hardship and food insecurity. Individuals and families who qualify for SNAP and TANF generally live below 200% of the federal poverty line. SNAP provides monthly benefits to help low-income families buy food, as well as 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. Economic and food security supports are as critical now as ever, as historically high inflation and supply chain disruptions have substantially impacted the cost of food and other basic needs.

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 of the ban, [many states](#) still bar individuals entirely or impose onerous and costly requirements that create barriers to restoring eligibility.

The lifetime drug felony bans on SNAP and TANF imposed by Congress undermine efforts by individuals to transition successfully from the criminal legal system into their communities and to provide for their families. Formerly incarcerated people [struggle](#) with unemployment and other barriers to reentry. Food insecurity is also pervasive among people transitioning from the criminal legal system. A [study](#) by researchers at the Yale University School of Medicine found that 91 percent of individuals suffer from food insecurity upon release from prison. A second [study](#) found that 20 percent of formerly incarcerated people report suffering from food insecurity — double that of the general population — with even higher rates among formerly incarcerated women and Black individuals also at elevated risk of being impacted by the lifetime ban. Based on the experience of many of the undersigned organizations, people convicted of a drug felony are also often

in need of essential supports such as SNAP and TANF assistance as they seek substance use disorder treatment and strive to achieve recovery. Preventing people convicted of a drug felony from accessing vital SNAP and TANF assistance makes pathways to recovery and prosperity much harder to secure.

The lifetime drug felony bans on SNAP and TANF assistance disproportionately impacts people of color. Policing and drug law enforcement activity is typically concentrated in low-income communities of color, resulting in higher drug-related conviction rates for Black and Brown people. While Black and Latino people use drugs at similar rates as other people, [nearly](#) 80 percent of people in federal prison and almost 60 percent of people in state prison for drug offenses are Black or Latino. Women of color—who comprise significant [portions](#) of SNAP and TANF recipients—are increasingly likely to be subject to this lifetime ban. Over the past 35 years, drug-related arrests have risen nearly 216 [percent](#) for women.

The lifetime felony drug bans hurt not only individuals with convictions, but also their 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, causing those family members to experience food insecurity and increased stress that can lead to preventable [health](#) problems for both adults and children.

Ultimately, the lifetime drug felony bans on SNAP and TANF can increase the risk of recidivism. One study by an economist at the University of Maryland [estimated](#) that individuals still subjected to the drug felony ban in Florida are about nine percentage points more likely to return to prison after release than individuals with prior drug convictions who have access to SNAP under Florida's partial opt-out of the federal ban. Similarly, a 2017 study by a researcher at the Harvard University School of Law [found](#) that eligibility for SNAP and TANF significantly reduces recidivism.

After twenty-five years, we believe it is time for Congress to end these punitive bans.

We urge you to prioritize lifting the ban on SNAP and TANF for those with prior drug convictions in the next Farm Bill reauthorization. Please contact Grant Smith, Deputy Director of the Office of Federal Affairs with Drug Policy Alliance, at gsmith@drugpolicy.org for questions about this letter or to discuss this request.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of the issues outlined above.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

A Little Piece Of Light

A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing)

Advancement Project

African American Ministers In Action

AIDS United

Alliance to End Hunger

American Friends Service Committee

American Humanist Association

American Muslim Health Professionals

American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine

American Public Health Association

American Society of Addiction Medicine
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Bread for the World
CAN-DO Foundation
Capuchin Province of St. Mary
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Justice and Human Dignity
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)
Children's Defense Fund
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Church World Service
CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants)
Civil Rights Corps
Clergy for a New Drug Policy
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Based Public Safety Collective
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Criminalization of Poverty Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Due Process Institute
Drug Policy Alliance
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality Federation
Fair and Just Prosecution
FedCURE.org
Federal Public & Community Defenders
Feeding America
Felician Sisters of North America
First Focus Campaign for Children
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Futures Without Violence
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Watch
ICNA Council for Social Justice
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Just Future Project
Justice in Aging
JustLeadershipUSA
Justice Strategies
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Legal Action Center
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Minorities for Medical Marijuana
MomsRising
Movement for Family Power
Multifaith Initiative to End Mass Incarceration
NAACP-LDF
NASTAD
National Action Network
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Council of Churches

National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Law Project
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Opportunity Youth United
Partnership to End Addiction
Pax Christi USA
People's Action
Prison Policy Initiative
Prosperity Now
REDF
Reframe Health and Justice
RESULTS
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.
School Sisters of Notre Dame, CP JPIC Office
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi
SMART Recovery
Sojourners
Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund
StoptheDrugWar.org
Stop Stigma Now
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
The Center for Employment Opportunities
The Education Trust
The Movement for Black Lives
The Sentencing Project
The United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society
Transgender Law Center
Treatment Communities of America

Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries
Vera Institute of Justice
Veterans Cannabis Coalition
Voices for Progress
Washington Office on Latin America
Who Speaks For Me
Women Advancing Nutrition Dietetics and Agriculture

State Organizations

Addiction Connections Resource (Maryland)
AIDS Alabama (Alabama)
AIDS Foundation Chicago (Illinois)
Alianza Latina (South Carolina)
Alabama Arise (Alabama)
Allison Nutrition Consultants, Inc. (Tennessee)
Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition (Washington)
Arizona Food Bank Network (Arizona)
Audubon Park Covenant Church (Florida)
Benedictine Oblate (Colorado)
California Association of Food Banks (California)
CAP OC - OC Food Bank (California)
Center for Living and Learning (California)
Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (California)
Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy (North Carolina)
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (Illinois)
Chrysalis (California)
CICOA Aging & In-Home Solutions (Indiana)
Citizens Action Coalition of IN (Indiana)
Coalition for a Strong Nebraska (Nebraska)
Coalition on Homelessness (California)

Colorado Center on Law and Policy (Colorado)
Colorado Children's Campaign (Colorado)
Colorado-CURE, Inc. (Colorado)
Communities United (Maryland)
Community Action of Nebraska (Nebraska)
Community Alliance on Prisons (Hawaii)
Community Fresh Start of Upstate (South Carolina)
Community Initiatives Inc. (South Carolina)
Community Legal Services of Philadelphia (Pennsylvania)
Compass Family Services (California)
County Welfare Directors Association of California (California)
D.C. Hunger Solutions (District of Columbia)
Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids (Michigan)
Down Home NC (North Carolina)
Elephant Circle (Colorado)
Empower Missouri (Missouri)
Equality California (California)
Every Texan (Texas)
Farming Hope (California)
Federation of Virginia Food Banks (Virginia)
Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin (Wisconsin)
Feeding Indiana's Hungry (Indiana)
Feeding Texas (Texas)
Feeding the Carolinas (North Carolina)
Feeding Wisconsin (Wisconsin)
Fenway Health (Massachusetts)
Florida Policy Institute (Florida)
Food Bank of Northern Indiana (Indiana)
Food Bank of Northern Nevada (Nevada)
Food Bank of Northwest Indiana (Indiana)
Food Finders Food Bank (Indiana)
Food for People (California)

FoodShare South Carolina (South Carolina)
FPWA (Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies) (New York)
Franciscan Peace Center, Clinton (Iowa)
Fresh Approach (California)
Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana (Indiana)
GLIDE (California)
GLM2 Foundation, Inc. (Georgia)
GRACE/End Child Poverty CA (California)
Greater Boston Legal Services (Massachusetts)
Greater Hartford Legal Aid (Connecticut)
Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger (Pennsylvania)
Greenville Homeless Alliance (South Carolina)
Hazel Crest Community UMC Food Pantry (Illinois)
Heal Da Homies (District of Columbia)
Heart Ministry Center (Nebraska)
Henry Street Settlement (New York)
HomeRise San Francisco (California)
Hoosier Action (Indiana)
Hunger Action Los Angeles (California)
Hunger-Free PA (Pennsylvania)
Iglesia Luterana San Andres (South Carolina)
Illinois Alliance for Reentry & Justice (Illinois)
Indiana Catholic Conference (Indiana)
Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc. (Indiana)
Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute (Indiana)
Indiana Public Health Association (Indiana)
Indy Hunger Network (Indiana)
Intertribal Spiritual Lodges (Nebraska)
James' Place Inc. (Maryland)
Juma Ventures (California/Washington)
Just Harvest (Pennsylvania)
Kansas Appleseed (Kansas)

Kentucky Center for Economic Policy (Kentucky)

Kentucky Food Action Network (Kentucky)

Keys2Work (Indiana)

La Raza Community Resource Center (California)

Latino Communications CDC (South Carolina)

LEX V (Lived Experience Voices) (North Carolina)

LiveWell Greenville (South Carolina)

Loaves & Fishes (South Carolina)

Los Angeles LGBT Center (California)

Lowcountry Food Bank (South Carolina)

Lowcountry Street Grocery (South Carolina)

Lutherans Engaging in Advocacy Ministry (New Jersey)

Maine Drug Policy Lab at Colby College (Maine)

Maryland CURE (Maryland)

Maryland Hunger Solutions (Maryland)

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (Massachusetts)

Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Mental Health America of SC (South Carolina)

Michigan League for Public Policy (Michigan)

Middle Ground Prison Reform (Arizona)

Mill Village Ministries (South Carolina)

Miracle Hill Ministries (South Carolina)

Mission Meals Coalition (California)

Mommieactivist and Sons (District of Columbia)

Montana Budget & Policy Center (Montana)

Montana Food Bank Network (Montana)

More Than Our Crimes (District of Columbia)

Mother Hubbard's Cupboard (Indiana)

NAACP South Carolina State Conference (South Carolina)

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Maryland Chapter (Maryland)

NC Justice Center (North Carolina)

NC Reentry Innovators for Success, Inc. (North Carolina)

Nebraska Appleseed (Nebraska)
Nebraskans For Peace (Nebraska)
New Hampshire Hunger Solutions (New Hampshire)
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty (Maryland)
Newark Community Street Team (NCST) (New Jersey)
NJ State Industrial Union Council (New York)
No More Empty Pots (Nebraska)
Northwest Harvest (Washington)
NYATEP (New York)
Oasis Legal Services (California)
OMI Cultural Participation Project (California)
Oregon CURE (Oregon)
Orion Industries (Washington)
Pack Away Hunger, Inc (Indiana)
PAL: Play. Advocate. Live Well. (South Carolina)
Parent Voices CA (California)
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon (Oregon)
Pax Christi Florida (Florida)
Pioneer Human Services (Washington)
Pisgah Legal Services (North Carolina)
Polo's Pantry (California)
PRC (California)
Project Bread (Massachusetts)
RecycleForce (Indiana)
Reentry Alliance of Nebraska Racial Justice Policy Group (Nebraska)
Remerg (Colorado)
RESULTS Tennessee (Tennessee)
RISE (Nebraska)
River Valley Organizing (Ohio)
Root & Rebound of SC (South Carolina)
Safer Foundation (Illinois)
Safer Together (California)

Salvation and Social Justice (New Jersey)
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank (California)
San Francisco Pretrial Diversion Project (California)
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County (California)
Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County (California)
Second Helpings (Indiana)
Shady Oak Baptist Church, Greenville (South Carolina)
Shriver Center on Poverty Law (Illinois)
Silver State Equality (Nevada)
Sisters of the Presentation (Iowa)
Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania (Ohio)
Slater-Marietta Community Association (South Carolina)
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center (South Carolina)
Southern Tier AIDS Program (New York)
Srs. Of St Dominic Caldwell CGI (New Jersey)
St. Vincent de Paul Indianapolis (Indiana)
Statewide Poverty Action Network (Washington)
Syracuse-Onondaga Food Systems Alliance (New York)
TASC, Inc. (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities) (Illinois)
Taxpayers for Public Safety (California)
Tennessee Justice Center (Tennessee)
Terre Haute Catholic Charities Foodbank (Indiana)
The Bridge Church (Nevada)
The Festival Center (District of Columbia)
The Gubbio Project (California)
The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (Maryland)
The Hood Incubator (California/Illinois)
The Nashville Food Project (Tennessee)
The Southwest Collective (Illinois)
The Women's Building (California)
Together (Nebraska)
Tubman House (District of Columbia)

URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America (Rhode Island)

Utahns Against Hunger (Utah)

UUFHCT (Texas)

Virginia Hunger Solutions (Virginia)

Virginia Poverty Law Center (Virginia)

Voices for Children in Nebraska (Nebraska)

Voices of Hope, Inc. (Maryland)

Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP (Washington)

West Virginia Hepatitis Academic Mentoring Partnership (WVHAMP) (West Virginia)

Western Center on Law and Poverty (California)

Whitman-Walker Institute (District of Columbia)

William E. Morris Institute for Justice (Arizona)

WISDOM (Wisconsin)

Women's Fund of Omaha (Nebraska)

Young Women's Freedom Center (California)