



SOCIAL ACTION LINKING TOGETHER

The justice of a society can be measured by how the most vulnerable are faring and treated.

Fact Sheet: Support Lifting the Ban on Food Stamps

- 1) Virginia is 1 of 25 states that has a modified ban on food stamps for those convicted of a drug felony.
- 2) 16 states have no ban on food stamps for those convicted of a drug felony, and 9 have a full ban.
- 3) The lifetime ban in Virginia is for drug distribution resulting in a felony conviction, not drug possession. The ban on food stamps for drug possession was lifted in 2005.
- 4) The ban has not been shown to decrease drug use. Furthermore, by raising a new substantial barrier to successful reentry, the ban may actually harm public safety and public health, while contributing to swollen prison populations.
- 5) For formerly incarcerated individuals transitioning back to their home communities, SNAP and TANF benefits help meet their basic survival needs while searching for jobs or housing. The programs reduce the likelihood that formerly incarcerated individuals will return to criminal activity to secure food or other essentials for themselves or their families.
- 6) Restrictions on SNAP and TANF benefits are also counterproductive for providing drug treatment services. Historically, drug treatment facilities have used their patients' SNAP and TANF benefits to subsidize the cost of treatment.
- 7) The ban has not been shown to decrease drug use, and there is no evidence to date that any harm caused by the ban has been offset by the realization of significant positive outcomes for public safety.
- 8) The ban negatively impacts children. When a parent is denied cash assistance or food stamps, children suffer. A family's funds go toward caring for the entire family, not only the individuals who qualify for federal assistance. Food stamps and cash support are essential for the health, survival and stability of families.
- 9) The ban punishes individuals and their families twice for the same crime. ***This is vengeance, not justice.*** Those impacted by this ban have already paid whatever price the criminal justice system demands of them. The ban provision represents additional punishment that limits the families' ability to get needed transitional assistance for self-sufficiency. **SEE ATTACHED LETTER.**
- 10) Among other incongruous effects, the ban is inconsistent with Congressional support for reentry services through funding provided by the Second Chance Act, as well as current policy recommendations of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council.