



Arizona Food Bank Network

Our Vision: A Hunger-Free Arizona

HB 2211: SNAP Drug Felon Application Modernization for Recidivism Reduction

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps Arizonans who are struggling to make ends meet to put food on the table. As the nation's most effective anti-hunger program, SNAP helps Arizonans experiencing food insecurity, and that includes people re-entering society after serving time in prison. Federal law allows states discretion to authorize people with specified felony drug offenses eligibility. Currently, Arizona law allows people with prior drug felony convictions to apply for SNAP but prescribes actions and activities that are oftentimes duplicative of probation.

House Bill 2211 (supplemental nutrition assistance; eligibility) sponsored by Rep. Justin Wilmeth (R-LD2) and co-sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Longdon (D-LD5) streamlines SNAP eligibility for people with use and possession-related drug felonies, eliminating duplication between the Department of Economic Security and County Probation offices. In addition to being in good probation status or completed probationary terms, individuals must meet all other SNAP eligibility requirements.

Access to SNAP reduces recidivism.

Arizonans who have spent time in prison require strong social and economic supports to successfully re-enter society. SNAP helps them survive as they go through the difficult process of seeking housing and employment. Drug offenders that are eligible for SNAP at release are 13 percent less likely to reoffend in the year following release.*

HB 2211 removes residual punishment and reduces administrative burden. By making it easier for individuals who have been released from prison to access SNAP, a program that will reduce the chances they end up back in prison, the legislation eliminates the continued punishment that follows individuals years after a drug possession or use offense. It also reduces the burden on state resources by streamlining the application process.

SNAP provides short-term relief. The average length of participation for families with kids is 12 months, which allows parents some stability until they can find employment and self-sufficiency. Prior to the pandemic, the average monthly benefit was \$118/person, or \$1,416/year. Post-pandemic the average will be about \$185/person, or \$2,220/year. Individuals must have a net income of less than 100 percent of the federal poverty line (\$1,215/month, or \$14,580/year) to qualify.

Current law negatively impacts children. Kids live in struggling households with adults transitioning from prison that are far more likely to experience food insecurity than the general population. Finding stable employment is challenging, which affects the entire household, including kids. When an adult in the household is deemed ineligible, that household's benefits are reduced but the number of mouths to feed is not.

*Yang, Crystal. "Does Public Assistance Reduce Recidivism?" *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings* 2017, 107(5): 551-555.

Questions? Contact Ashley St. Thomas at ashley@azfoodbanks.org or 602-775-5035.