**HB2060: Food Assistance Reduces Recidivism & Helps Families**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps Arizonans who are struggling to make ends meet to put food on the table. It is the country’s most effective anti-hunger program. In 1996, federal law enacted a lifetime ban on SNAP participation for individuals convicted of felony drug offenses, but states had discretion to opt out or modify this rule. Arizona modified it in 2017, and it’s time to fully restore access to those who have served their time.

Current state law applies additional eligibility requirements to people with prior drug felony convictions. **HB 2060** requires that drug offenders comply with probation, including drug testing, as applicable, to be eligible for SNAP. It eliminates the need for an individual to be somehow involved in a substance abuse treatment program, which is costly and burdensome to verify, and potentially unnecessary for offenses from years ago. Individuals still have to meet all SNAP eligibility requirements related to income and assets.

**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.*

**HB2060 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. The average monthly benefit is $118/person, or $1,416/year. Post-pandemic the average will be about $147/person, or $1,764/year. Individuals must have a net income of less than 100 percent of the federal poverty line ($1,074/month, or $12,888/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.


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