



United States Conference
of Catholic Bishops
Domestic Justice and
Human Development



JESUITS



Catholic Prison Ministries
COALITION



Catholic
Charities
USA

Working to Reduce Poverty in America

September 23, 2025

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Angie Craig
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Member Craig:

As Catholic organizations committed to ending domestic hunger and advocating for fair opportunities for returning citizens who have paid their debt to society, we strongly urge Congress to eliminate the ban on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for people with drug-related felony convictions. The ban prevents ex-offenders from fully reintegrating into society and fails to advance public safety.

In 1996, after only two minutes of floor debate, Congress imposed a lifetime ban on individuals convicted of a drug felony from receiving SNAP. Although states can opt out of enforcing this ban, state policymakers must affirmatively do so, and 22 states continue to limit SNAP eligibility for people with felony drug convictions.

The time is ripe for Congress to act. As Congress works towards passing a strong farm bill, we encourage you to include the *Re-Entry Support Through Opportunities for Resources and Essentials (RESTORE) Act*. The *RESTORE Act* ([H.R. 5223](#)) eliminates this SNAP ban on those who have committed a drug felony. The legislation also codifies a USDA administrative waiver to SNAP state agencies that allows individuals to apply for SNAP 30 days prior to their release from incarceration. These changes will strengthen SNAP as an anti-poverty program.

Why ending the ban is important:

- **Access to SNAP critically helps returning individuals avoid hunger, thereby reducing recidivism risk and cost to taxpayers.** Research suggests that most individuals released from incarceration experience food insecurity. Studies have also found that recently released individuals who receive public assistance like SNAP are less likely to recidivate, while withholding assistance from returning individuals increases recidivism risk.¹
- **Denying food assistance because of a past conviction has no public safety or crime deterrent value.** Instead, enforcement of the ban only compounds hunger and poverty that can undermine

¹ American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, [Snapping Back: Food Stamp Bans and Criminal Recidivism](#)

successful reentry to the community.

- **Denial of food assistance compounds the obstacles to overcoming addiction, weakens individuals' ability to recover, and may increase risk of overdose and death.** Many people with drug convictions have a history of struggling with substance use disorder. Removing barriers to SNAP, such as the drug felony ban, can help mitigate hunger which can interfere with successful treatment and recovery outcomes. Risk of overdose and death is also high following release from incarceration. Ensuring adequate nutrition along with access to health care during an individual's reentry can help decrease their risk of returning to substance use and of potential overdose.
- **The ban hurts the children and families of people with felony drug convictions.** Families receive a much lower overall benefit when a parent is ineligible for SNAP because of a drug felony conviction and this ban. This means that households with a banned adult have less access to food and support, thereby increasing the risk of families with children going hungry.
- **The lifetime SNAP ban prevents returning individuals from benefiting from SNAP E&T programming.** The SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program provides job and vocational training opportunities that can help prevent recidivism and support effective reentry.

Our organizations support strong re-entry programs across the nation. We help provide the necessary tools – food, shelter, housing, education, mentoring, and workforce development programs – for those who have returned home from incarceration to lead a more productive life. We can assert from on-the-ground experience that if Congress truly wishes to provide a hand up to those in need and remove barriers to employment and further incarceration, eliminating the felony ban on SNAP benefits should enjoy strong bipartisan support.

We look forward to continued collaboration with Congress and the Administration in trying to find solutions that would significantly reduce food insecurity and eliminate hunger in our nation.

Sincerely,

Most Rev. Borys Gudziak
Archbishop of Ukrainian
Archeparchy of Philadelphia
Chair, Committee on Domestic
Justice and Human
Development

Robert Cunningham
Executive Director
Catholic Prison Ministries
Coalition

Rev. Chris Kellerman, SJ
Secretary of Justice & Ecology
Jesuit Conference of Canada and
the United States

Kerry Alys Robinson
President & CEO
Catholic Charities USA

John Berry
National President, National
Council of the United States,
Society of St. Vincent de Paul