

[2015 Session] Eliminate the Prohibition of SNAP Benefits to Applicants With a Drug Conviction

Policy Background:

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – at one time called the Food Stamps Program – is a federal program, administered by each state, which provides money to qualifying recipients so they can buy food. No state pays for the actual SNAP benefits; they are federally funded. The administrative costs related to SNAP benefits are divided equally between states and the federal government.

Texas is one of a handful of states that imposes a lifetime ban on these benefits to otherwise-qualified recipients if they have any type of drug conviction.

Texas' Health and Human Services Commission estimates that eliminating the necessity of checking each SNAP applicant for a drug conviction would save enough time to reduce current staffing levels by seven full-time-equivalent positions statewide.^[1] This would increase the agency's efficiency by allowing it to better use those employees' time in other areas.

Texas policy-makers should allow the provision of SNAP benefits to otherwise eligible applicants regardless of criminal history, thus reducing food instability among applicants and their dependent children.

Key Facts:

- Amending current restrictions relating to SNAP eligibility would reduce unnecessary administrative costs of drug testing that are currently absorbed by the Health and Human Services Commission, as well as increase the flow of federal funds to low-income Texans, resulting in “marginal increases to both state and local sales tax revenue.”^[2]
- Allowing otherwise-qualified households to receive benefits would reduce food insecurity, which is “associated with detrimental physical, psychological, behavioral, social, and educational functioning in children and adults.”^[3]

Relevant Bills:

- **Bill Number:** [HB 570](#) (Allen)
Bill Caption: Relating to the eligibility of certain persons for the supplemental nutrition assistance program.
Hearing Notice: House Human Services Committee, [Notice of Public Hearing on April 13, 2015](#)
- **Bill Number:** [HB 840](#) (Naishtat)
Bill Caption: Relating to the eligibility of certain persons for the supplemental nutrition assistance program.
TCJE Materials: [Fact Sheet](#)
Hearing Notice: House Human Services Committee, [Notice of Public Hearing on April 13, 2015](#)
- **Bill Number:** [HB 1267](#) (Senfronia Thompson, Naishtat)
Bill Caption: Relating to the eligibility of certain persons for the supplemental nutrition assistance program.
TCJE Materials: [Fact Sheet](#)
Hearing Notice: House Human Services Committee, [Notice of Public Hearing on April 13, 2015](#)
Archived Hearing Video: House Human Services Committee, [04/13/15 Video](#) [TCJE testimony begins at 00:14:10]
Outcome: [Amended to SB 200, Effective](#)
- **Bill Number:** [SB 470](#) (Rodríguez)
Bill Caption: Relating to the eligibility of certain persons for the supplemental nutrition assistance program.
- **Bill Number:** [SB 606](#) (Garcia)
Bill Caption: Relating to the eligibility of certain persons for the supplemental nutrition assistance program.
TCJE Materials: [Fact Sheet](#)

[1] Legislative Budget Board, *Texas State Government Effectiveness and Efficiency Report*, January 2013, p. 157;
<http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Documents/Publications/GEER/Government%20Effectiveness%20and%20Efficiency%20Report%202012.pdf>

[2] Ibid.

[3] Courtney C. Nalty, Joseph R. Sharkey & Wesley R. Dean, “Children’s reporting of food insecurity in predominately food insecure households in Texas border colonias,” *Nutrition Journal*, 2013, p. 15; <http://www.nutritionj.com/content/12/1/15/abstract>