

ALLOW SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT TO LIFT THE DRUG FELONY BAN

THE DRUG FELONY BAN

- The federal 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (“welfare reform”) permanently bars anyone convicted of a drug-related felony from receiving food stamps and TANF, but States have the option to limit the ban or eliminate (“opt out” of) it altogether.
- This is a lifetime ban – they can never receive food stamps or cash assistance even if they completed their sentence, overcame an addiction, were employed but got laid off, or earned a certificate of rehabilitation or clemency.
- TANF and food stamps are important funding streams for residential alcohol and drug and other treatment programs, which can use them to pay for patients’ room and board.

THE DRUG FELONY BAN HURTS FAMILIES

- A family of three on TANF, living in Pennsylvania, receives \$403.00 monthly. A family of three in Pennsylvania, where the mother is ineligible for TANF benefits because of the drug felony ban, receives \$316.00 monthly for the household; the mother is also denied Medicaid assistance, even if she is pregnant or has special medical needs.
- In Pennsylvania alone, the drug felony ban has caused 392 parents each year to lose TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid benefits.
- Parents rendered ineligible for TANF benefits are also denied day care and job training services that are part of the TANF program—services that are imperative for low-income families seeking stability and self-sufficiency.
- Children in families affected by the drug felony ban are more vulnerable to foster care placements because their mothers are denied TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid—benefits that are critical to providing for children’s basic needs of housing, food, and clothing.

THE BAN PUNISHES MOTHERS WHO HAVE TURNED THEIR LIVES AROUND

- Mothers with non-violent drug felonies are generally untreated addicts who are incarcerated for illegal activity committed because of their addiction. When these families do achieve access to family treatment programs, they enjoy recovery rates of up to 62 percent and criminal activity subsides.
- Mothers who have done the hard work of ending their drug addiction deserve the opportunity to start over again and to receive the transitional support that TANF, Medicaid, and food stamps provide to move towards self-sufficiency.
- Many families in treatment and exiting treatment cannot stabilize their families without the transitional support of TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid benefits.

IF TREATMENT LIFTS THE HIGHER ED BAN....

- Whereas treatment lifts the Higher Education Ban on scholarship moneys if a person has been convicted of a drug felony, treatment does not lift the Drug Felony Ban.
- If treatment lifts the ban for scholarship moneys, then treatment should lift the ban for parents in need of the basic necessities of food, clothes, and Medical benefits to stabilize their families.



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www.rebeccaproject.org ☐ 202.265.3911