



**Missouri Association for Social Welfare**  
**www.masw.org**

## **FACT SHEET ON**

# **Opting out of the Food Stamp Ban Legislation**

Modifies the eligibility requirements for food stamp assistance

**\$ Missouri is missing out on Millions in Federal Dollars \$**

- **House Bill 1238/ Senate Bill 522** would opt Missouri out of a lifetime ban (created by the Federal Government) on ex-drug felons from receiving the Food Stamp benefit. When the Federal Government enacted the “drug felony provision” in 1996, Congress gave states the option to “opt out” of the ban and allow ex-drug felons in their state to qualify for Food Stamps.
- According to the National HIRE Network, since 1996, 41 states have opted out of or modified the ban, in whole or in part. These states are receiving the Federal Food Stamp dollars that Missouri is not receiving and won’t receive until it opts out of the ban.
- Missouri, along with 8 other states, still completely deny benefits to ex-drug offenders and is missing out on millions in Food Stamp dollars because of it.
- The State of Missouri will benefit economically if the State Legislature would pass **House Bill 1238/ Senate Bill 522**. Estimates show that by opting out of this lifetime ban, Missouri could potentially bring an additional \$7 million in federally-funded food stamp dollars into the State.
- Food Stamps are recognized by the Federal Government as an excellent way to spur economic activity (According to the USDA- every \$1 in food stamps results in \$1.79 in economic activity) because food stamp benefits would be spent at local grocery stores, thereby supporting our local businesses and local farmers. Thus, with the passage of **House Bill 1238/ Senate Bill 522**, Missouri could infuse millions more in Federal food stamp dollars into our local economy and spur millions more in economic activity across the State.
- Under federal law, the food stamps **cannot** be denied to any other ex-offender, besides someone convicted of a drug-related felony. This means that a person can commit a violent crime (murder, robbery, or even treason), serve their time and, upon their release from prison, potentially take part in the Food Stamp Program.

- Opting out of the ban would not automatically give every ex-drug felon access to the Food Stamp Program. As the bill states, individuals would have to successfully complete a drug treatment program and/or successfully complete any requirements that the court has set forth. After that, the individual would also have to apply and qualify for the program, including meeting the financial eligibility requirements of the program.
- By providing support to ex-drug offenders in their efforts to become addiction-free through drug treatment programs and other assistance programs (i.e. employment programs, educational programs, assistance programs, and Food Stamps) these individuals are much more likely to succeed than if we do nothing.
- **House Bill 1238/ Senate Bill 522** will help reduce the cycle of recidivism in which drug offenders tend to get caught. By reducing recidivism we are also decreasing our Department of Corrections costs – a large part of our State’s budget.

\$ Missouri is missing out on Millions in Federal Dollars \$

\*\*These Federal dollars are going to other States,  
but could be coming to Missouri if the State Legislature would:

## **Pass House Bill 1238 and Senate Bill 522**

\*\* Updated January 2012 by Missouri Association for Social Welfare