

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Missouri Senate Votes to Join 41 Additional States In Eliminating SNAP Ban for Ex-Offenders with Drug Felonies**

(JEFFERSON CITY, Mo) The Missouri Association for Social Welfare (MASW) celebrates the 29-4 passage of Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 680 (SCS SB 680) on April 2 and expresses appreciation to the bill's sponsor, Sen. Shalonn "Kiki" Curls (D-Kansas City), and to each senator who voted yes. The bill next moves to the Missouri House for further debate.

SCS SB 680 would eliminate (with some conditions) the current lifetime ban on eligibility for SNAP benefits (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps) for those persons who have been convicted of a drug-felony. Under the current ban, ex-offenders cannot receive nutrition assistance from SNAP, even after the person's sentence has been satisfactorily completed. This is the only classification of crime with such a penalty.

Ex-offenders have to meet rigorous criteria to regain eligibility for SNAP benefits in SCS SB 680. They must successfully complete a drug treatment program and/or successfully complete all requirements set by the courts. After that, the individual would also have to apply and qualify for the program, including meeting the income eligibility requirements of the program.

Jeanette Mott Oxford, executive director of MASW said, "The lifetime ban was a part of the Clinton Administration's 1996 welfare reform law, and it has proven to be disastrous social policy. That's why 41 states have previously opted out of the ban, in whole or in part. We hope Missouri will finally join these states in 2014."

Rep. Paul Wieland (R-Imperial) has sponsored a similar bill, HB 1589, that has cleared a House committee, but that bill is not yet on the House calendar. Both bills are supported by a large and diverse Missouri coalition including MASW, the Missouri Family Network, the Missouri Baptist Convention, the Missouri Retailers Association, the Missouri Grocers Association, Catholic Charities, Metropolitan Congregations United, MORE<sup>2</sup>, the Queen of Peace Center, CCO, Missouri Faith Voices, the Missouri Association for Community Action, the Jewish Community Relations Council, and Operation Food Search. The bill is also supported by these national organizations: The Justice Fellowship; The Sentencing Project.

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Please Note: Those wishing to speak with persons who are currently banned from receiving benefits should contact: **Lora McDonald, Executive Director of MORE<sup>2</sup>, (816)277-5912 or [loramore2@yahoo.com](mailto:loramore2@yahoo.com),**