

April 26, 2002

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman  
Finance Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable William Thomas  
Chairman  
Ways and Means Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Baucus and Congressman Thomas:

We are writing to urge you to end the ban on eligibility for TANF (welfare) assistance and food stamps for individuals with drug felony convictions, many of whom are mothers supporting children, and to request the availability of comprehensive drug and alcohol treatment for welfare recipients who need it. Expanding access to these life-saving services is a goal that has been articulated by the Administration in its 2002 Drug Control Strategy and by the Congress through its FY 2002 appropriations increases for these services.

Under the law, individuals with a drug felony conviction are not eligible for TANF assistance and food stamps, unless the State in which they live enacts legislation to opt out of or modify the ban. Currently 21 states still have the full ban in place. The ban applies to convictions where the conduct and conviction occurred after August 22, 1996, and lasts for the person's lifetime.

The drug felony ban has limited access to food stamps and support for parents and individuals with drug and alcohol problems both during and after treatment. This has hampered access to treatment because food stamps and TANF funds have been used by drug and alcohol treatment programs to help support the cost of services, such as room and board at residential programs. For example, a study of eight women's residential programs in California found that providers reported losses in monthly revenue ranging from none to 25 to 30%. These losses reduce access to care.

Treatment programs serving women with children, including women on welfare, have demonstrated many positive health, welfare, child welfare, and employment outcomes.

- According to 1996 data for the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment's Pregnant and Postpartum Women and Infants programs, after treatment:
  - **67.4%** of women were not using drugs or alcohol
  - **90.3%** of women were not involved with the criminal justice system
  - **86.5%** of children were living with their mothers.
- An Oregon study found that individuals who completed drug treatment received **65%** higher wages than those who did not complete treatment.

Additionally, as mothers with children seek to transition out of treatment back into the community, food stamps and TANF funding for low income families provide critical support, but many women with addiction histories have drug felonies that deny them access to these important benefits. Without these benefits and the ensuing support they provide, chances for successful recovery for many is greatly reduced as a result of unstable living environments. Without this transitional financial assistance, women who try to maintain employment in the early phases of recovery are more likely to relapse and lose their employment. Repealing the ban gives these women the means and incentive to finish and successfully transition out of treatment, back into the community, and onto gainful employment.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to call Jenny Collier at the Legal Action Center for assistance. Her number is (202) 544-5478. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alcohol and Drug Program Administrators Association of California, (Tom Renfree)  
Arizona Council of Human Service Providers, (David Miller)  
Association of Alcoholism and Addiction Programs of Washington State, (Sarajane Siegfriedt)  
Association of Substance Abuse Programs of Texas, (Cynthia Humphrey)  
Caron Foundation, (Doug Tieman)  
Connecticut Association of Non-Profits, (Nora Duncan)  
Drug & Alcohol Treatment Association of Rhode Island, (Neil A. Corkery)  
Drug and Alcohol Service Providers of Pennsylvania, (Deb Beck)  
Evergreen Manor, (Linda Grant)  
Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association, (John Daigle)  
Hazelden, (Nick Hilger)  
Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association, (Angela Bowman)  
Illinois Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities, (Melody Heaps)  
Iowa Substance Abuse Program Directors' Association, (Ardis Glace)  
Join Together, (Janice Ford Griffin)  
Legal Action Center, (Jenny Collier)  
Maine Association of Substance Abuse Programs, (David Faulkner)  
Mental Health & Substance Abuse Corporations of Massachusetts, Inc., (Elizabeth Funk)  
Minnesota Association of Resources for Recovery and Chemical Health, (David, Ewald)  
NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals, (John Avery)  
National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers, (Ronald Hunsicker)  
National Association of People with AIDS, (Terje Anderson)  
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, (Pope Simmons)  
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, (Stacia Murphy)  
National Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco Prevention, (Jeannette Noltenius)  
National Organization for Children of Alcoholics, (Sis Wenger)  
National Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities, (Irene Gainer)  
New York State Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers, (John Coppola)  
North Carolina Association for Behavioral Health Care, (Randolph E. Cloud)

Ohio Council of Behavioral Healthcare Providers, (Pat Bridgman)  
Pacific Crest Consort, Vancouver, WA, (Lynn Samuels)  
Partnership for Recovery, (Carol McDaid)  
Tennessee Association for Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services, (Rogers Thompson)  
The Betty Ford Center, (John Schwarzlose)  
Therapeutic Communities of America, (Linda Wolf Jones, 202/518-5475)  
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, (Tom Wick)  
YWCA Housing, Vancouver, WA, (Julie DeSmith)