

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

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BILL: SB 776

INTRODUCER: Senator Powell

SUBJECT: Temporary Cash Assistance Eligibility

DATE: February 5, 2024

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Hall	Tuszynski	CF	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			AHS	
3.			FP	

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**I. Summary:**

Public assistance programs help low income families meet their basic needs, such as housing, food, and utilities. Two of the most commonly utilized public assistance programs in Florida are the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or food assistance, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program. Both programs operate through federal and state level coordination and administration.

Federal law prohibits TCA and food assistance eligibility for any individual with a felony drug conviction and imposes a lifetime ban on such benefits, unless a state elects to opt out of the provision. Florida has opted out of this federal provision, with one limitation. Florida has implemented a modified ban wherein an applicant may not be denied benefits solely based on a felony drug conviction, unless the conviction is for drug trafficking. Studies have shown that public assistance, such as TANF and SNAP, reduces recidivism, while banning access to assistance has been linked to increased recidivism.

SB 776 removes the ban against individuals with felony drug convictions receiving TCA and SNAP assistance. Under the bill, TCA and SNAP benefits may not be denied to an individual solely on the basis of a drug trafficking conviction.

The bill has an indeterminate, negative fiscal impact on state government.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2024.

## II. Present Situation:

### Public Assistance

Public assistance programs help low-income families meet their basic needs, such as housing, food, and utilities.<sup>1</sup> The social safety net for American families depends on the coordination of a complex patchwork of federal, state, and local funding and program administration.<sup>2</sup> Through various programs, public assistance is capable of helping families to keep children in their family home through economic difficulties<sup>3</sup> and reducing the material hardship that has been linked to negative outcomes in children<sup>4</sup>, as well as driving the economy in times of market downturns<sup>5</sup> and supporting the career advancement of low-income adults striving to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.<sup>6</sup>

Two of the most commonly utilized public assistance programs in Florida are the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or food assistance and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Temporary Cash Assistance (TANF or TCA) program.

### *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families*

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) system was established at the federal level in 1996 through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996.<sup>7</sup> PRWORA ended the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, a federal program which provided dedicated funding for cash assistance to needy

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<sup>1</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, *Introduction to Benefit Cliffs and Public Assistance Programs*, available at <https://www.ncsl.org/human-services/introduction-to-benefits-cliffs-and-public-assistance-programs> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> Brookings Institute, *State Social Safety Net Policy: How are States Addressing Economic Need*, available at <https://www.brookings.edu/events/state-social-safety-net-policy-how-are-states-addressing-economic-need/> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Providing assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes is one of the four purposes of the TANF program. See Office of Family Assistance, *About TANF*, available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/tanf/about> (last visited February 1, 2024); see also Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Three Reasons Why Providing Cash to Families with Children is a Sound Policy Investment*, available at <https://www.cbpp.org/research/income-security/three-reasons-why-providing-cash-to-families-with-children-is-a-sound> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> Urban Institute, *What Explains the Widespread Material Hardship among Low-Income Families with Children?*, available at [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99521/what\\_explains\\_the\\_widespread\\_material\\_hardship\\_among\\_low-income\\_families\\_with\\_children\\_0.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99521/what_explains_the_widespread_material_hardship_among_low-income_families_with_children_0.pdf) (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Vogen, Cristina Miller, Katherine Ralston, *Impact of USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) on Rural and Urban Economies in the Aftermath of the Great Recession*, Economic Research Service (2021), available at [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3938336](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3938336) (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> Brookings, *Policies that Reduce Intergenerational Policy*, available at <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/policies-that-reduce-intergenerational-poverty/> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>7</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Policy Basics: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families*, available at <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/policy-basics-an-introduction-to-tanf> (last visited February 1, 2024). See also Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Family Assistance, *Major Provisions of the Welfare Law*, available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/policy-guidance/major-provisions-welfare-law> (last visited February 1, 2024).

families with children, and alternatively created the broad-purpose TANF block grant.<sup>8</sup> TANF became effective July 1, 1997, and was reauthorized by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

### ***Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)***

Direct cash assistance to needy families is the foundation of public welfare in the U.S.<sup>9</sup> prior to the establishment of TANF in 1996, direct cash assistance to needy families was the primary method of providing support to low-income families with children. Since the transition to the TANF block grant system, the number of families receiving direct cash assistance has waned significantly, even among eligible populations, and the majority of TANF funds are allocated for indirect methods of assisting families.<sup>10</sup>

The Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program is Florida's direct cash assistance program for needy families. The TCA program is one of several Florida programs funded with the TANF block grant. Through the TCA program, families who meet specific technical, income, and asset requirements<sup>11</sup> may receive cash assistance in the form of monthly payments deposited into an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) account.<sup>12</sup>

TCA is administered by several state agencies through a series of contracts and memoranda of understanding. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) receives the federal TANF block grant funds, processes applications, determines initial eligibility, monitors ongoing eligibility, and disburses benefits to recipients. The Department of Commerce<sup>13</sup> (Florida Commerce) is responsible for financial and performance reporting to ensure compliance with federal and state measures and for providing training and technical assistance to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs). LWDBs provide information about available jobs, on-the-job training, and education and training services within their respective areas and contract

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<sup>8</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: The Decline in Assistance Receipt Among Eligible Individuals*, available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47503> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>9</sup> Public cash assistance to needy families has its origin in the early 1900s; state and local entities financed “mother’s pension” programs that provided support to single, often widowed, mothers so that children could be raised in their family homes rather than be institutionalized. See Congressional Research Service, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: The Decline in Assistance Receipt Among Eligible Individuals*, available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47503> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>10</sup> *Supra*, note 9.

<sup>11</sup> Children must be under the age of 18, or under age 19 if they are full-time secondary school students. Parents, children, and minor siblings who live together must apply together. Additionally, pregnant women may also receive TCA, either in the third trimester of pregnancy if unable to work, or in the ninth month of pregnancy. See DCF, *Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)*, available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/public-assistance/temporary-cash-assistance> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>12</sup> DCF, *Temporary Cash Assistance Fact Sheet*, available at [https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2022-10/tcafactsheet\\_0.pdf](https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2022-10/tcafactsheet_0.pdf) (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>13</sup> The Department of Commerce, formerly known as the Department of Economic Opportunity, was renamed as such in the 2023 Legislative session. See Ron DeSantis, *Governor DeSantis Signs Legislation to Streamline Economic Development in Florida*, available at <https://www.flgov.com/2023/05/31/governor-desantis-signs-legislation-to-streamline-economic-development-in-florida/> (last visited February 1, 2024).

with one-stop career centers.<sup>14</sup> CareerSource Florida has planning and oversight responsibilities for all workforce-related programs and contracts with the LWDBs on a performance-basis.<sup>15</sup>

The number of families receiving TCA dramatically increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, peaking at more than 50,000 families receiving TCA payments in July of 2020.<sup>16</sup> While TCA caseloads have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, they have decreased steadily since July 2020. In November 2023, 34,015 families, including 44,309 children, received TCA.<sup>17</sup>

#### TCA Eligibility

States have broad discretion in determining who is eligible for cash assistance. Florida's TCA program requires applicants to meet all of the following criteria to be eligible:<sup>18</sup>

- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified noncitizen<sup>19</sup>;
- Be a legal resident of Florida;
- Have a minor child residing with a custodial parent or relative caregiver, or be a pregnant woman in the ninth month of pregnancy;
- Have a gross income of 185 percent or less of the federal poverty level;<sup>20</sup>
- Have liquid or nonliquid resources, of all members of the family, valued at less than \$2,000;<sup>21</sup>
- Register for work with the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB), unless an applicant qualifies for an exemption.

Florida imposes a lifetime limit of 48 cumulative months for an adult to be eligible for and receive cash assistance. Current law outlines specific, limited circumstances under which a person may be exempt from the time limitation;<sup>22</sup> however, most households receive TCA for fewer than six months.

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<sup>14</sup> Florida Department of Commerce, CareerSource Florida, *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Annual Statewide Performance Report*, available at <https://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2022-23-WIOA-Annual-Performance-Report.pdf> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> DCF, *ESS Standard Reports: Caseload Report*, available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/public-assistance/additional-resources-and-services/ess-standard> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>17</sup> DCF, *ESS Standard Reports: Flash Points*, available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/public-assistance/additional-resources-and-services/ess-standard> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>18</sup> DCF, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families – State Plan Renewal*, available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2022-10/TANF-Plan.pdf> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>19</sup> Section 414.095(3), F.S. A qualified noncitizen includes an individual who is admitted to the United States as a refugee or who is granted asylum, a Cuban or Haitian entrant, or a noncitizen who has been admitted as a permanent resident. It also includes an individual who, or an individual whose children or parent, has been battered or subject to extreme cruelty in the U.S. by a spouse, a parent, or other household member, and has applied for or received protection under the federal Violence Against Women Act, if certain criteria are met.

<sup>20</sup> Gross income cannot exceed 185% FPL, and a family's countable income cannot exceed the payment standard for the family size. There is a \$90 deduction on earned income per individual. See Florida Department of Children and Families, *Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)*, available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/public-assistance/temporary-cash-assistance> (last visited January 25, 2024).

<sup>21</sup> Licensed vehicles with a combined value of not more than \$8,500 are excluded if a family includes individuals subject to the work requirement, or if the vehicle is necessary to transport a disabled family member and the vehicle has been specially equipped to transport the disabled person. See s. 414.075, F.S.

<sup>22</sup> Section 414.105, F.S.

### TCA Work Requirements

To be eligible for full-family TCA, work-eligible adult family members must participate in work activities in accordance with s. 445.024, F.S., unless they qualify for an exemption.<sup>23</sup> Individuals who fail to comply with the work requirements may be sanctioned.<sup>24</sup> Individuals are required to participate in work activities for the maximum number of hours allowable under federal law.<sup>25</sup> The number of required work or activities hours is determined by calculating the value of the cash benefits and then dividing that number by the hourly minimum wage amount.

Work Participation Requirements	
Family Composition	Required Work Participation Hours
Single parent with a child under age 6	20 hours weekly of “core” work activities
Single parent with a child over 6, or two-parent families where one parent is disabled	30 hours weekly with at least 20 hours of “core” work activities
Married teen or teen head of household under age 20	Maintains satisfactory attendance at secondary school or the equivalent, or participates in education related directly to employment for at least 20 hours weekly
Two-parent families who do not receive subsidized child care	35 hours weekly with at least 30 hours of “core” work activities, combined between both parents
Two-parent families who receive subsidized child care	55 hours weekly with at least 50 hours in “core” activities, combined between both parents

Pursuant to state and federal law, there are 12 distinct types of work activities which can be used to satisfy a TCA recipient’s work requirement.<sup>26</sup> The 12 activities are categorized as either “core” or “supplemental” activities; such categorization impacts how the activity is counted toward a TCA recipient’s work requirement.

Work Activities	
“Core” Activities	“Supplemental” Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsubsidized employment</li> <li>• Subsidized private-sector employment</li> <li>• Subsidized public-sector employment</li> <li>• Work experience</li> <li>• On-the-job training</li> <li>• Job search and job readiness assistance</li> <li>• Community service programs</li> <li>• Vocational educational training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job skills training directly related to employment</li> <li>• Education directly related to employment</li> <li>• Completion of a secondary school program</li> </ul>

<sup>23</sup> Section 414.095(1), F.S. A person may be exempt from the work requirement if they receive benefits under the Supplemental Security Income Program or the Security Disability Program, is a single parent of a child under three months of age (parenting preparation activities may be alternatively required), is exempt from the TCA time limitation due to hardship, or not considered work-eligible under federal policy. *See also* DCF, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families – State Plan Renewal*, available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2022-10/TANF-Plan.pdf> (last visited February 1, 2024).

<sup>24</sup> Section 414.065, F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Section 445.024(2), F.S.

<sup>26</sup> 45 CFR 261-30; s. 445.024(1), F.S.; *see also* DCF, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) – An Overview of Program Requirements* (2016), available at [https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2022-10/TANF%20101%20final\\_1.pdf](https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2022-10/TANF%20101%20final_1.pdf) (last visited January 25, 2024).

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing child care services to an individual participating in a community service program</li> </ul> |  |
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While each of these activities may contribute toward a TCA recipient's work requirement, federal policy limits the extent to which certain activities may satisfy the work requirement. Federal and state law further limits how the different work activities may count toward a person's work requirement based on the characteristics of the individual and the length of time in which the individual engages in the activity.<sup>27</sup>

TCA recipients who fail to comply with work requirements may be sanctioned by the LWDBs. Sanctions result in cash assistance being withheld for a specified period of time, the length of which increases with repeated lack of compliance. Consequences for failure to participate in work activities include:<sup>28</sup>

- First noncompliance – cash assistance is terminated for the entire family for a minimum of ten days or until the individual complies, whichever is later.
- Second noncompliance – cash assistance is terminated for the entire family for one month or until the individual complies, whichever is later.
- Third noncompliance – cash assistance is terminated for the entire family for three months or until the individual complies, whichever is later.

### ***Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)***

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).<sup>29</sup> SNAP is the nation's largest domestic food and nutrition program for low-income Americans, offering nutritional assistance to millions of individuals and families each year through the provision for funds that can be used to purchase eligible foods.<sup>30</sup> In fiscal year 2020, SNAP provided assistance to approximately 39.9 million people living in 20.5 million households across the U.S.<sup>31</sup> SNAP benefits support individual households by reducing the effects of poverty and increasing food

<sup>27</sup> 45 CFR § 261.31; s. 445.024, F.S.; see also Congressional Research Service, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): The Work Participation Standard and Engagement in Welfare-to-Work Activities*, available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44751> (last visited January 26, 2024).

<sup>28</sup> Section 414.065, F.S.

<sup>29</sup> The Food Stamp Program (FSP) originated in 1939 as a pilot program for certain individuals to buy stamps equal to their normal food expenditures: for every \$1 of orange stamps purchased, people received 50 cents worth of blue stamps, which could be used to buy surplus food. The FSP expanded nationwide in 1974. Under the federal welfare reform legislation of 1996, Congress enacted major changes to the FSP, including limiting eligibility for certain adults who did not meet work requirements. The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 renamed the FSP the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and implemented priorities to strengthen program integrity, simplify program administration, maintain states' flexibility in how they administer their programs, and improve access to SNAP. See US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Short History of SNAP*, available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/short-history-snap> (last visited February 2, 2024).

<sup>30</sup> US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Overview*, available at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/> (last visited February 2, 2024).

<sup>31</sup> US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Characteristics of SNAP Households: FY 2020 and Early Months of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Characteristics of SNAP Households*, available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/characteristics-snap-households-fy-2020-and-early-months-covid-19-pandemic-characteristics> (last visited February 2, 2024).



security while supporting economic activity across communities, as SNAP benefits directly benefit farmers, retailers, food processors and distributors, and their employees.<sup>32</sup>

SNAP is administered at the state level in Florida by DCF.<sup>33</sup> DCF determines and monitors eligibility and disburses benefits to SNAP participants. The state and federal governments share the administrative costs of the program, while the federal government funds 100 percent of the benefit amount received by participants.<sup>34</sup> Federal laws, regulations, and waivers provide states with various policy options to better target benefits to those most in need, streamline program administration and field operations, and coordinate SNAP activities with those of other programs.<sup>35</sup>

The amount of benefits, or allotment, for which a household qualified depends on the number of individuals in the household and the household's net income. To calculate a household's allotment, 30% of its net income is subtracted from the maximum allotment for that household size.<sup>36</sup> This is because SNAP households are expected to spend about 30% of their own resources on food.<sup>37</sup> As of October 2023, 3,112,411 Floridians are participating in SNAP.<sup>38</sup>

#### SNAP Eligibility & Work Requirements

To be eligible for SNAP, households must meet the following criteria: (1) gross monthly income must be at or below 200 percent of the poverty level; (2) net income must be equal to or less than the poverty level; and (3) assets must be below the limits set based on household composition.<sup>39</sup>

Individuals may be deemed ineligible for SNAP due to any of the following:<sup>40</sup>

- Conviction of drug trafficking;
- Fleeing a felony warrant;
- Breaking SNAP or TANF program rules;
- Failure to cooperate with the child support enforcement agency; or
- Being a noncitizen without qualified status.

<sup>32</sup> US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Economic Linkages*, available at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/economic-linkages/> (last visited February 2, 2024).

<sup>33</sup> Section 414.31, F.S.

<sup>34</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*, available at <https://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap#:~:text=The%20federal%20government%20pays%20the,the%20states%2C%20which%20operate%20it> (last visited February 2, 2024).

<sup>35</sup> US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *State Options Report*, available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/waivers/state-options-report> (last visited February 2, 2024).

<sup>36</sup> US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *SNAP Eligibility*, available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility> (last visited February 2, 2024).

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Number of Persons Participating*, available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-persons-1.pdf> (last visited February 2, 2024).

<sup>39</sup> DCF, *SNAP Eligibility*, available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/public-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/snap-eligibility> (last visited February 2, 2024). *See also* s. 414.32, F.S.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.* *See also* s. 414.32, F.S.

Able-bodied, non-elderly adults are generally required to participate in work activities in order to be eligible for SNAP. Federal policy outlines two tiers of work requirements for SNAP recipients: the general work requirement and the Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirement.

The general work requirement applies to all recipients between 16 and 59 years of age, unless they qualify for an exemption. The general work requirements include requiring a recipient register for work, participating in SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) or workfare if assigned, taking a suitable job if offered, and not voluntarily quitting a job or reducing work hours below 30 a week without a good reason.<sup>41</sup>

Individuals are exempt from the general work requirements if they are:<sup>42</sup>

- Already working at least 30 hours a week (or earning wages at least equal to the federal minimum wage multiplied by 30 hours);
- Meeting work requirements for another program (TANF or unemployment compensation);
- Taking care of a child under six or an incapacitated person;
- Unable to work due to a physical or mental limitation;
- Participating regularly in an alcohol or drug treatment program; or
- Studying in school or a training program at least half-time (but college students are subject to additional eligibility rules).

If an individual capable of meeting the general work requirements fails to do so, they are disqualified from getting SNAP for at least a month and must start meeting the requirements to get SNAP again. If the person gets back on SNAP and fails to meet the requirements again, they are disqualified for longer than a month and could be permanently disqualified.<sup>43</sup>

The ABAWD work requirement applies to Adults between 18 and 52 years of age, able-bodied, and without dependents, unless otherwise exempt from the general work requirement.<sup>44</sup>

ABAWDs are required to work or participate in a qualifying work program for a combined total of at least 80 hours per month. ABAWDs who fail to comply with the ABAWD work requirement for three months in a 36-month period will lose their SNAP benefits.<sup>45</sup>

### **Prohibition on Receiving TCA and Food Assistance – Felony Drug Convictions**

Federal law prohibits TCA and food assistance eligibility for any individual with a felony drug conviction and imposes a lifetime ban on such benefits, unless a state elects to opt out of the

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<sup>41</sup> US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *SNAP Work Requirements*, available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/work-requirements> (last visited February 2, 2024).

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*

<sup>44</sup> *Id.* Adults who are unable to work due to a physical or mental limitation, are pregnant, have someone under 18 in their SNAP household, are excused from the general work requirement, are a veteran, experiencing homelessness, or were in foster care on their 18th birthday and are under age 24 are exempt from the ABAWD requirements.

<sup>45</sup> US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) ABAWD Policy Guide*, available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNAP-ABAWD-Policy-Guide-September-2023.pdf> (last visited February 2, 2024).



provision.<sup>46</sup> Florida has opted out of this federal provision<sup>47</sup>, with one limitation. Florida has implemented a modified ban wherein an applicant may not be denied benefits solely based on a felony drug conviction, unless the conviction is for drug trafficking<sup>48</sup>, including agreeing, conspiring, combining, or confederating with another person to commit an act after August 22, 1996.<sup>49</sup>

Under Florida law, drug trafficking is a first-degree felony punishable by up to 30 years of imprisonment and – depending upon the drug type and amount trafficked – fines from \$25,000 to \$500,000.<sup>50</sup> During the application process, individuals seeking public benefits self-attest if they have been convicted of felony drug trafficking. This information is then confirmed by an eligibility specialist during the applicant’s interview. If the illegal behavior that led to the conviction occurred on or before August 22, 1996, the disqualification does not apply regardless of the date of the conviction. If a court expunges the felony drug trafficking conviction, the individual is not subject to the disqualification.<sup>51</sup>

In Florida, while an individual is disqualified, his or her family may still apply for and receive benefits. In such instances, the disqualified individual’s needs are excluded in calculating the family’s benefits, although the individual’s income and assets are included in determining the household’s eligibility. This means that while those with felony drug trafficking convictions may still apply for assistance for their children, the overall household receives less support because of the current bans.

DCF reports that in the 2023 calendar year, 402 individuals were denied benefits due to a drug trafficking conviction.<sup>52</sup> The number of people otherwise eligible who choose not to apply due to disqualification due to a felony drug trafficking conviction is unknown.

### ***Prohibition Policy by State***

Many states have chosen to opt-out or implement a modified ban on the receipt of SNAP and TCA benefits for individuals with felony drug convictions. Except for South Carolina, all other states and Washington, D.C., have chosen to modify or remove the ban for at least one of the two affected programs.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Pub. L. No. 104-193, s. 115.

<sup>47</sup> Section 414.095(1), F.S.

<sup>48</sup> Section 414.095, F.S. Any person may be convicted of drug trafficking if they knowingly sell, purchase, manufacture, deliver, or bring into this state specified illegal drugs, such as cannabis, morphine, cocaine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, oxycodone, or if they are knowingly in actual or constructive possession of these drugs, and the drugs are over a certain amount. S. 893.135, F.S. Drug trafficking also includes those who agree, conspire, combine, or confederate with another person to commit the act.

<sup>49</sup> See DCF’s ESS Policy Manual 1420.2200, Individual Convicted Felony Drug Trafficking (TCA), available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2023-02/1410.pdf> (last visited February 2, 2024).

<sup>50</sup> Section 893.135, F.S.

<sup>51</sup> *Supra*, note 51.

<sup>52</sup> DCF, Agency Bill Analysis for SB 776, on file with the Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee.

<sup>53</sup> The Center for Law and Social Policy, *No More Double Punishments: Lifting the Ban on SNAP and TANF for People with Prior Felony Drug Convictions*, available at <https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/no-more-double-punishments/> (last visited February 2, 2024).

As of April 2022, seven<sup>54</sup> states fully ban TANF benefits, including TCA, for individuals with prior felony drug convictions, while 17<sup>55</sup> states, including Florida, have modified bans, and 26<sup>56</sup> states and Washington, D.C., have no ban for SNAP benefits. South Carolina is the only state with a full ban on SNAP benefits for individuals with prior felony drug convictions. Florida is one of 21<sup>57</sup> states with modified bans, and 28<sup>58</sup> states and Washington, D.C., have no ban for SNAP benefits.

### ***Recidivism Studies***

Studies have shown that public assistance such as TANF and SNAP reduces recidivism, while banning access has been linked to increased recidivism. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that approximately 66 percent of state prisoners were rearrested within three years of release, and 82 percent were arrested within 10 years.<sup>59</sup> Such odds of recidivating can be offset through providing support; the barriers to re-entering society as a productive member are reduced when people are able to meet their basic needs. A Harvard Law School study found that access to SNAP and TANF significantly reduced an individual's risk of being reincarcerated by up to 10 percent within one year.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, a study of recidivism before and after the Florida ban took effect estimated the ban increased drug traffickers' likelihood of returning to prison by at least 9.5 percent.<sup>61</sup>

## **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

**Section 1** of the bill amends s. 414.095, F.S., to remove the existing prohibition against individuals with felony drug trafficking convictions receiving TCA and SNAP.

Under the bill, TCA and food assistance benefits may not be denied to an individual on the basis of a drug trafficking conviction. This will allow these individuals to access TCA and SNAP assistance, as long as they meet all other eligibility requirements.

The bill also makes conforming language changes.

**Section 2** of the bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2024.

<sup>54</sup> Arizona, Georgia, Missouri, Nebraska, South Carolina, Texas, and West Virginia.

<sup>55</sup> Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Montana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Utah.

<sup>56</sup> Alabama, Arkansas, California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

<sup>57</sup> Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

<sup>58</sup> Arkansas, California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming.

<sup>59</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 24 States in 2008: A 10-Year Follow-Up Period (2008-2018), Special Report*, available at [https://bjs.ojp.gov/BJS\\_PUB/rpr24s0810yfup0818/Web%20content/508%20compliant%20PDFs](https://bjs.ojp.gov/BJS_PUB/rpr24s0810yfup0818/Web%20content/508%20compliant%20PDFs) (last visited February 2, 2024).

<sup>60</sup> Crystal S. Yang, *Does Public Assistance Reduce Recidivism?*, Vol. 107, No. 5, Am. Econ. Rev. 551 (2017).

<sup>61</sup> Cody Tuttle, *Snapping Back: Food Stamp Bans and Criminal Recidivism*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Am. J. Econ. Pol'y 301 (2019).

**IV. Constitutional Issues:****A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None identified.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

Individuals previously disqualified from receiving cash or food assistance because of felony drug trafficking convictions will now be eligible to receive such benefits, assuming they meet all of the other eligibility requirements, which will provide additional financial support to low income families.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

There is an indeterminate, negative fiscal impact.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends s. 414.095 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:**

**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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