



**Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice
Testimony in Support of HB2215
Wednesday, January 26, 2022
Presented by PJ Carter**

Black Lives Matter Topeka Ks is a social advocacy organization fighting for the protection and liberation of Black Life through advocacy and direct action. We appreciate the opportunity to provide support for HB2215.

HB2215 would reverse a policy of institutional racism. The policy of denying government assistance to a group of people that consists of primarily Black and brown people is discrimination. Enshrining that discrimination in law institutionalizes it.

Denying formerly incarcerated people supplemental nutrition assistance does not reduce drug-related activities. Denying formerly incarcerated people supplemental nutrition assistance traps people in a cycle of poverty. When essential food resources are denied, the overall health of our communities suffers. Black Lives Matter Topeka operates as a member of the community; we partner with other community organizations to offer food distribution, community resources, and direct assistance to folks locally, as well as statewide. It is from this vantage point that we understand how critically important access to food and nutrition are for people re-entering and living in our communities.

When people are able to use supplemental nutrition assistance, they are able to use their personal resources for other purposes, such as:

- Paying for transportation to get to and from work
- Child care expenses
- Fees for school books and materials
- Mental health, including addiction intervention, resources
- Dental services
- Eyeglasses/contact lenses
- Paying off fines and court expenses

These types of purchases are the way people correct the paths of their lives. For people who have histories of chemical use, abuse, and dependency, freeing up resources to make these types of investments can have transformational impact.

Passage of HB2215 would be an excellent investment in rehabilitation and reintegration of people who have served their prison sentence and are ready to return to family, friends and

community. Please favorably report the Bill for passage to your colleagues in the House of Representatives. Thank you again for your time and attention to this important issue.