

Testimony of Cat Butler

Members of the House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice,

My name is Cat Butler, I am a resident of Wichita, Kansas. Thank you for allowing time today for me to testify in support of HB 2215.

Currently, Kansas law says that Kansans with multiple drug convictions cannot access SNAP benefits. This would include me, and until very recently I was unaware of this. In the six years since my convictions, I have held gainful employment for five years, I have attended college and completed vocational school, and yet I find being a resident in Kansas difficult as ever.

My status as a felon severely reduces the jobs I can get (including the field in which I attended school) which affects the amount of money I can receive. Pan to now, almost three years into this pandemic. I am still struggling to find a job, and after learning about HB 2215, I finally think I understand why I never got a response regarding my SNAP applications throughout this past year.

I'm grateful to have gotten my life together since my drug convictions, but I feel as though I'm at a loss. If no one will hire me, the state won't feed me, what exactly is to stop me from going back to what I was doing before? And more than just me, there are probably thousands of folks with a similar story across Kansas. Hopefully, my story can reach someone out there. I deserve to live here, and food access in Kansas would help a lot with that.