Repeal of the Lifetime Ban on Basic Needs and Job Training & Supports Signed Into Law (June 2014)
We did it! The lifetime ban is repealed!

Responding to our collective voices, personal testimonies and overwhelming evidence that providing basic needs assistance (like food and rent), employment training and work supports decrease the likelihood of recidivism, California’s legislative leaders and Governor Brown repealed the optional ban for people with prior drug-related convictions from receiving CalFresh (food stamps) benefits and CalWORKs (basic needs support and job training).

The Budget Act of 2015, passed by the legislature on last Sunday and signed by Governor Brown on Friday, repeals the lifetime ban for people as long as they are complying with the conditions of their probation or parole. The new law will be enacted April 1, 2015.

This decision follows over a decade of organizing that culminated in this year’s broad coalition of over 140 community-based organizations, including those led by Californians impacted by the law, who made this issue a priority not only because it would reduce recidivism and crime, but also because of how harmful it was to families and single adults who were trying to start over. Repeal of the ban also had editorial support from the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times.

The lifetime ban repeal had been championed in recent years by Senators Mark Leno and Senator Loni Hancock who were joined this year by important Assembly allies, Budget Chairperson Nancy Skinner and Assembly Justice Reinvestment Select Committee Co-chairs, Assembly Members Ammiano and Jones Sawyer. In the end, the budget bill that contained the repeal was voted off of the floor with strong support in both houses.

While we were disappointed to see $500 million in new jail spending allocated in the budget—resources that could have been allocated towards early childhood education, poverty reduction or the development of human capital—we are hopeful that, as the state continues to seek solutions to costly prison overcrowding, decision-makers will consider policies that, like the repeal of the CalFresh and CalWORKS ban, reduce criminalization of poverty, make communities safer and improve opportunities for former prisoners to rehabilitate. Below are four such solutions that we hope you help to lift up... after you take just a moment to celebrate.

End Criminalization of People without Homes
Sign on to Endorse the Homeless Bill of Rights Campaign.

End Disparities in Sentencing, Probation and Asset Forfeiture
Send your letter of support for SB 1010 (Mitchell) to the Assembly Appropriations Committee by July 3rd. (Sample attached.)

End Criminalization of Kids Who Miss School
Send your letter of support for AB 2382 (Bradford) to the Senate Appropriations Committee by July 3rd. (Sample attached.)

End Hunger on College Campuses
Send your letter of support for AB 1930 (Skinner) to reduce hunger among college students from low-income schools to Senate Appropriations Committee by July 3rd. (Sample attached.)

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