



March 16, 2023

To: House Corrections Committee

Re: **House Bill 1743**

Position: For

Chairman Herrero and honorable members of the House Corrections Committee,

My name is Alexa Garza, Texas Policy Associate with The Education Trust, a member of the Statewide Leadership Council, and a system-impacted individual who served 19 years in TDCJ. I am writing to express my support for HB 1743, which would enable inmates to apply for supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits in a manner that allows them to be provided at the time of discharge or release.

I was a recipient of SNAP within days of my release and can personally attest to the value of these benefits in helping me successfully transition to life outside of prison walls. Having completed my bachelor's degree while incarcerated, I am proud to now be working and earning a self-sustaining wage without relying upon SNAP assistance. I believe HB 1743 will help others achieve similar re-entry success and independence.

However, I didn't get to this point on my own. Reentry was truly a community effort, including family members who took me in and gave me a place to stay when I was first released. In fact, I was only able to apply for and complete the process to receive SNAP benefits because I had a support system – family who drove me to the Health and Human Services building early in the morning, two hours before scheduled office hours. I waited along with several others for the doors to open so we could be first in line. It was recommended that we arrive early as wait times sometimes exceed more than 5 hours.

Even if my family never said or even felt I was a burden to the household, SNAP benefits gave me something to contribute and start to regain my independence. And for many who leave prison without any support, days or even weeks without access to food can make the difference between landing on your feet and landing back in the system.

It may seem like a small thing, but HB 1743 would make a big difference in the lives of Texans newly released from prison as they adjust to their new lives while taking on the responsibility of countless other administrative tasks. Thank you for your consideration and your service on the House Corrections Committee.

Gratefully,  
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