

**Name:** Susan Reynolds

**Title:** Community Organizer

**Organization or Agency:** Chicks Ahoy Farm

**Topic:** SB00497 - AA PROTECTING FOOD SECURITY FOR VETERANS AND OTHERS AND MITIGATING FEDERAL CUTS TO NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE.

Supports

**Testimony:**

Dear Human Services Committee Members,

I am writing to ask you to support SB 497, AAC Protecting Food Security for Veterans and Others and Mitigating Federal Cuts to Nutritional Assistance, because it would remove barriers to SNAP access for people currently disqualified for having probation or parole violations. As you consider this bill aimed at supporting food access for CT residents and families most in need, please also consider:

Formerly incarcerated people are twice as likely to experience food insecurity. Over 70% of women, and over 80% of Black women on probation, earn under \$20k a year. Excluding them from food assistance, or discouraging them from applying, keeps food away from some of the people who need it most. Because applications for assistance often threaten harsh consequences for misrepresentations or mistakes, simply asking about probation violations is likely keeping people from applying even when they are eligible.

Research shows that food security is linked to increased neighborhood safety, and has even linked SNAP access directly to reduced recidivism. Excluding people on probation from SNAP doesn't just hurt those people; it hurts the whole community.

This issue is important to me because it affects my senior community, my neighborhood, my city and my state. Friends and neighbors in my senior community supply their children, grandchildren and sometimes yes even great grandchildren cash to help them when SNAP isn't available to them. When seniors on fixed incomes help their relatives it can place them in hardship for themselves. I lost track of the number of times I have heard neighbors say "What else can I do? I can't let my child/grandchild go without." Penalizing Connecticut residents continually for bad choices they made is harsh. When people are denied access to safety net programs like SNAP, as food is an undeniable need for survival, crime rises hurting all residents in the state with higher prices due to theft. It becomes a vicious circle.

Everyone in our community deserves equal access to SNAP benefits and food, especially people working to successfully reenter and remain in our communities.

Thank you,  
Susan Reynolds