



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: D'Anelle Desire
Director of Communications
Tennessee Justice Center
d-desire@tnjustice.org

Tennessee Justice Center's SNAP Overpayment Petition Urges Governor Lee to Waive Overpayments and Support Struggling Families

Nashville, TN, Apr. 18th, 2023 — Many families in Tennessee who qualified for SNAP benefits during the pandemic are now being asked to pay back federal dollars to the state, causing significant financial hardship. In response, nearly 700 Tennesseans have signed a petition urging Governor Lee and the state of Tennessee to waive any SNAP overpayments during COVID-19 and support struggling households.

The Tennessee Justice Center (TJC) has worked with one East Tennessee family who was charged over \$5000 in SNAP benefits repayments to the state. The family, who applied for SNAP benefits to feed their two kids, received the maximum benefit which was meant to be an essential stimulus to families during the pandemic. However, it is now causing some families to endure debt and financial hardship.

“Governor Lee and the state of Tennessee could do better by households struggling to eat during the pandemic. It's just common sense to waive these overpayments and support those who are already facing significant financial challenges” says Signe Anderson, Director of Nutrition Advocacy at TJC.

In the height of the pandemic, the Department of Human Services approved many households in Tennessee to be eligible for SNAP benefits. However, they later determined that some were not eligible. The USDA has offered waivers to states to forgive overpayments on SNAP benefits that may have been wrongfully given to some households during the pandemic. Some states like North Carolina have opted into these pandemic waivers. Tennessee has not. The state is asking for that money back!

TJC believes that the better solution - that would cost Tennessee taxpayers nothing - is for the state to opt into the USDA pandemic overpayment waivers and ease the increased burden placed on families by issuing overpayments. This was a much-needed boost to families' monthly budgets while their children were home from school or daycare and many people lost or were forced to quit their jobs.

The petition urges Governor Lee to support struggling families by waiving any SNAP overpayments during COVID-19 and opt-in to the USDA pandemic overpayment waivers.

###

[About Tennessee Justice Center / www.tnjustice.org](http://www.tnjustice.org)

For over 26 years, the Tennessee Justice Center has been standing with vulnerable Tennessee families and helping them access basic necessities of life. Since opening our doors in 1996, TJC has used lawsuits, legislation and coalition building to overcome injustice, winning \$2 billion in health care and hundreds of millions in financial and nutrition assistance for Tennesseans. Aside from lawsuits, TJC helps assist seniors and other individuals with TennCare, SNAP and other public benefit programs.