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**Children & Family Services  
Committee**

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**HB 1554**

**Brief Description:** Concerning food stamp eligibility.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Pettigrew, Voloria, Darneille, O'Brien, Upthegrove, Miloscia, Cody, Hunt, Chase, Simpson, Haigh, McDermott, Flannigan, Kagi, Sullivan, Kenney, Schual-Berke, McCoy and Santos.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Allows individuals who have been convicted of a felony offense to receive benefits under the food stamp program.

**Hearing Date:** 2/10/03

**Staff:** Sonja Hallum (786-7092).

**Background:**

The goal of the federal food assistance program is to help low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet by supplementing their income with food stamp benefits. The federal government provides funding to the state to administer the program to residents within the state.

The federal government has enacted legislation to deny assistance and benefits to persons convicted of certain drug-related offenses. Under the federal statute an individual convicted of a felony offense involving a controlled substance is not eligible for benefits under the food stamp program.

The federal law which restricts the food stamp benefits contains a provision allowing individual states to opt out of this federal law. The individual states may enact a law to exempt persons from the federal restriction so that they can receive food stamp benefits.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Legislature finds that it is important in these dire economic times to maximize federal

food assistance funding to low-income individuals.

Washington is utilizing the opt-out provision in the federal statute restricting access to food stamp benefits. In Washington an individual who has a felony conviction involving a drug-related offense will not be prohibited from receiving benefits under the food stamp program.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 31, 2003.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.