



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 3, 2012

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 2286 - RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Hearing: Monday, February 3, 2012; 8:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of H.B. 2286 is to appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services to respond to the United States Department of Agriculture's mandate to amend supplemental nutrition assistance program eligibility requirements.

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill and offers the following comments.

The United States Department of Agriculture has offered states the option of expanding categorical eligibility for the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) since 1999. The optional provision allows states to confer categorical eligibility to households where all members benefit from a means-tested cash assistance program. Expanded categorical eligibility allows states to set their own asset and gross income tests, as long as the household's gross income does not exceed 200 percent of the poverty.

Hawaii implemented expanded categorical eligibility (ECE) provisions effective October 1, 2010. Hawaii chose to eliminate asset testing and to set the gross income limit to the maximum allowable of 200 percent of the federal poverty level. In 1999, six (6) states implemented ECE. In 2009, thirty-one (31) states had implemented ECE options. As of November 2010, there were 47 states or territories implementing ECE provisions.

The implementation of ECE provisions has contributed to the SNAP caseload, which increased 12.6% since October 2010. Between July 1, 2008 and June 30, however, we saw our caseload increase 63%. Concurrent with the increase in caseload, the department also experienced a substantial workforce reduction and lost time due to furloughs. All of these factors led to our current inability to timely process SNAP applications within federally mandated time limits. This deficiency resulted in a preliminary injunction being levied against the DHS. The preliminary injunction requires the department to be in full compliance with application processing provisions by December 31, 2011. Full compliance requires 100% of all applications, with a 5% margin of error, to be processed within 30 day or 7 day emergency processing windows. As of December 31, 2011, Hawaii was processing SNAP applications timely 76.5% of the time.

The Department appreciates and supports the intent of this bill to fully fund the SNAP program and allow the Department to adequately staff our eligibility processing units and to improve the department's electronic processing system to allow for timely, accurate and efficient processing of these important benefits for our low-income families in Hawaii. The DHS is unable to support this measure, however, to the extent that it seeks to appropriate additional funds to the DHS, outside the Governor's Supplement Budget request.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.

**STATE OF HAWAII HEALTH AUTHORITY**

**TO:** House Committee on Human Services  
Monday, February 06, 2012, at 8:30 A.M., Rm. 329  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96789

**FROM:** Marion F. Poirier, M.A., R. N.  
Member, Hawaii Health Authority

**SUBJECT:** STRONG SUPPORT OF H.B. 2286  
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**GOOD DAY CHAIR MIZUNO, VICE CHAIR JORDAN AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES:**

My name is Marion Poirier, and I am testifying as a member of the Hawaii Health Authority. I have 30 years of Hawaii experience as a nurse administrator, and my education includes a graduate degree in management/healthcare administration.

This testimony is in support of H.B. 2286 RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

As Authority members, we are most appreciative of your enacting last year's law to create the Hawaii Health Authority. Our membership was appointed by the Governor based upon recommendations by House and Senate leadership. We look forward to doing our part in creating and maintaining a universal care health system for Hawaii.

In addition, we are charged with looking at ways to reduce ever-escalating healthcare costs while maintaining a healthy population. In this regard, we strongly support H.B. 2286, which appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to respond to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's mandate to amend supplemental nutrition assistance program eligibility requirements.

It requests an appropriation of two million dollars, or as much as may be required, to move eligibility from 130 percent to 200 percent of income poverty guidelines. An artificial temporary increase in earnings has occurred for numerous persons, and especially families, because of temporary unemployment payments. Statistics show that many people do not find employment after the unemployment assistance ceases. Moreover, many become debtors because of the inadequacy of those same unemployment checks.

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We believe that food is critical for achieving a healthy Hawaii and that we lose important ground every day that a person is lacking proper nutrition.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the Authority's strong support for this bill.



**KOKUA KALIHI VALLEY**

*Comprehensive Family Services*

2239 North School Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96819

Phone (808) 791-9400 ♦ Fax (808) 848-0979

February 4, 2012

Committee on Human Services  
Hearing on Monday February 6, 2012 at 8.30 am  
Conference Room 329

**RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2286**

Dear Chair Mizuno:

I am writing to testify in strong support for HB 2286, relating to supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP). I am a physician working at Kokua Kalihi Valley and Kalihi Palama Health Center. Good nutrition is extremely important for to promote health and prevent chronic diseases.

The United States Department of Agriculture helps eligible needy seniors buy nutritious food. This program, formally called the Food Stamp Program, is now called SNAP. Food stamps are distributed through the state electronic benefits transfer system. In the past to qualify for SNAP, the household income must be below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines and liquid assets must be less than \$3000. President Obama has raised the eligibility to 200%, however Hawaii is lagging behind in making the most of these new guidelines.

Presently, due to severe cuts in Department of Human Services the processing of SNAP eligibility, application, and enrollment has dramatically dropped. Many of my patients, especially the elderly, are unable to obtain the nutritional assistance they need. With the cost of living extremely high in Hawaii, it very difficult for them to make ends meet. I do believe that with the appropriation of adequate funds to the Department of Human Services we will improve the access to food and health for many low-income families in Hawaii.

Please do the right thing and pass HB 2286. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,  
Ritabelle Fernandes, MD, MPH, FACP  
Internist & Geriatrician

Testimony for HUS 2/6/2012 8:30:00 AM HB2286

Conference room: 329

Testifier position: Support

Testifier will be present: Yes

Submitted by: Scott Wall

Organization: Individual

E-mail: [robertscottwall@yahoo.com](mailto:robertscottwall@yahoo.com)

Submitted on: 2/4/2012

Comments:

Testimony for HUS 2/6/2012 8:30:00 AM HB2286

Conference room: 329

Testifier position: Support

Testifier will be present: No

Submitted by: Brenda Kosky

Organization: Individual

E-mail: [Brenda.Kosky@gmail.com](mailto:Brenda.Kosky@gmail.com)

Submitted on: 2/4/2012

Comments:

Testimony for HUS 2/6/2012 8:30:00 AM HB2286

Conference room: 329  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Jory Watland  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [jorywatland@att.net](mailto:jorywatland@att.net)  
Submitted on: 2/5/2012

Comments:

Chair Mizuno and members of the committee:

I urge your full support for HB2286. SNAP is one of the most beneficial federal programs. It provides food for those with incomes inadequate to provide for a regular wholesome diet.

In 2010 President Obama expanded the eligibility for SNAP from 130% of poverty to 200% of poverty. Thousands of additional residents are now eligible for SNAP. In order to expand the eligibility process for the new eligibles, the DHS will need additional funds. The Federal government will provide 50% of the cost for staff, if the State provides the match.

With the funds in HB2286, thousands of residents of Hawaii will be moved closer to food independence and basic health in Hawaii will be improved.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Jory Watland, member, Hawaii Health Authority