



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

February 5, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Mele Carroll, Chair
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 387 - RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 5, 2013; 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 387 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 appreciates the Legislature's continued support of the Department's Benefit, Employment, and Support Services Division (BESSD), and its efforts in administering the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The 2012 Legislature had provided funding through the executive budget request that allowed the Department to make significant improvements in addressing timeliness in our SNAP application processing as a result of increased demand, and these improvements resulted in our families receiving much needed benefits in a timelier manner. The Department has requested funding for staffing and modernization efforts to

improve on its administration of the SNAP Program through the Executive Biennium Budget. We ask for the Legislature's support of the Executive Biennium Budget request.

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



Board of Directors

David Derauf, M.D.
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Victor Geminiani, Esq.

Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting and Commenting on HB 387 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
House Committee on Human Services
Scheduled for Hearing on Tuesday, February 5, 2013, 9:30 AM, Room 329

Thank you for an opportunity to testify on House Bill 387, which appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services to comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) mandate to amend the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility requirements.

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice (formerly Lawyers for Equal Justice) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) law firm created to advocate on behalf of low income individuals and families in Hawai'i on civil legal issues of statewide importance. Our core mission is to help our clients gain access to the resources, services, and fair treatment that they need to realize their opportunities for self-achievement and economic security.

The USDA's increase in gross income limits to 200 percent of the federal poverty level from 135 percent is a significant increase that will greatly benefit the residents of our state by improving the nutrition of Hawai'i's families in urgent need of food. SNAP benefits are fully funded by the federal government and administered by the state, which must remain in compliance with federal administrative rules. Our local economy sees significant benefits from maximizing participation in SNAP: according to the USDA, every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates \$9 in community spending. Most importantly, families experiencing food insecurity and hunger receive urgently needed food.

In November 2010, Hawai'i Appleseed (formerly Lawyers for Equal Justice) brought a federal lawsuit against the Department of Human Services for the Department's failure to comply with rules requiring timely processing of SNAP benefits applications. Some households waited for months beyond the federal requirement to provide benefits to eligible households within 30 days. The federal court issued an injunction in January 2012, ordering the Department to come into compliance. The Department responded by rapidly increasing the number of applications processed within the timeliness regulations.

We commend the Department's dedicated efforts that have resulted in dramatic improvements in the timely processing of SNAP benefits. Now that the USDA has raised the gross income limits to 200 percent of the poverty level, the Department needs additional funding to handle potential increases in caseload and continue its recent success in efficiently processing applications.

This bill is a wise proactive measure to ensure that the Department remains in compliance with federal requirements. The Department has shown it has the administrative and managerial skills to implement an effective system that ensures low-income people receive desperately-needed SNAP benefits in a timely manner. Adequate funding is critical to maintaining this compliance and we strongly support the appropriations proposed in HB 387.