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February 25, 2015

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Rachael Wong, DrPH, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 1347 HD 1 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL  
NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Hearing: Thursday, February 26, 2015, 11:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

**PURPOSE:** The purposes of H.B. 1347 HD 1 is to appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services to increase staff, improve systems and contract for necessary services related to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this measure and appreciates the Legislature's continued support of the DHS's Benefit, Employment, and Support Services Division (BESSD), and BESSD's efforts in administering the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The DHS has requested funding for staffing and modernization efforts to improve on its administration of the SNAP Program through the Executive Budget. We ask for the Legislature's support of the Executive Budget request.

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

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Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice  
Supporting HB 1347 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
House Committee on Human Services  
Scheduled for Hearing Thursday, February 26 2015, 11:00 AM, Room 308

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*Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice is a nonprofit law firm created to advocate on behalf of low-income individuals and families in Hawai'i on legal and policy issues of statewide importance. Our core mission is to help our clients access to the resources and fair treatment they need to realize their opportunities for self-achievement and economic security.*

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of House Bill 1347, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services for the administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), including appropriations for any necessary staff increases, improving electronic systems to streamline processing, and SNAP outreach.

According to a recent report from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), the leading national nonprofit organization working to improve public policies and public-private partnerships to eradicate hunger and under-nutrition in the United States, as of the end of Fiscal Year 2012, Hawaii had the third lowest level of participation in SNAP in the nation. The average participation level for all states was 83% while Hawaii had only 66% of those eligible participating in the program. HB1347 would appropriate critical funding for outreach, education and partnerships with nonprofit programs to expand the opportunities to identify and assist through the application residents who are eligible and in need of improved nutritional requirements.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is the largest food assistance program, with benefits entirely funded by the federal government, which also covers half of administrative and outreach costs. Food assistance is of particular importance in Hawai'i, where the cost of food almost 60 percent above the national average—the highest in the country. As one of the most effective public assistance programs, SNAP helps families make ends meet. Extensive research shows that SNAP reduces food insecurity and improves health outcomes. SNAP also benefits our entire community—the program improves nutrition for struggling families while also stimulating our economy as benefits are spent at local retailers. Every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates \$9 in total community spending. It also supports local agriculture, as an increasing number of farmers and open markets are accepting SNAP Electronic Benefits Transfer cards, helping low income families access fresh fruits and vegetables. Maximizing participation and smooth administration of SNAP also helps reduce the strain on over-burdened emergency food banks.

The Department of Human Services has recognized major improvements in its SNAP program, including timely processing of applications. Hawai'i Appleseed supports any necessary DHS

funding to help maintain this progress, make additional improvements, and increase participation in the program through outreach.

Again, thank you for an opportunity to testify in **strong support** of HB 1347 to help ensure that the Department of Human Services has the resources to ensure that all eligible families participate in SNAP.

**TESTIMONY**

For: HB 1347 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program


Thursday, February 26, 2015  
Committee on Finance  
11am. Room 308

Chair Sylvia Luke  
Vice Chair Scott Y. Nishimoto

In Strong Support of HB 1347

The SNAP program currently secures over \$500,000,000 annually for the State but continues to have a low participation rate per capita. If the participation rate could be raised 5% that would calculate to an additional \$25,000,000 to the State and does not include peripheral benefits to local retailers and farmers.

This is a no-brainer. Funds used for outreach to raise the participation rate would be multiplied exponentially.



Charles St. Sure



## FRAC Analysis of State-by-State SNAP Participation Rates

The national Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rate of participation among eligible people in 2012 was 83 percent - an increase from the 2011 participation rate of 78 percent -- but rates varied widely among states, according to a new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) report issued earlier this month.

While these participation rates are for 2012, states can use these rates to gauge their effectiveness in reaching eligible individuals, and to identify gaps and areas of improvement in their outreach and policy efforts.

- The top five performing states or districts in getting SNAP to eligible people were Maine (100 percent), Oregon (100 percent), Michigan (100 percent), District of Columbia (99 percent), and Vermont (98 percent).
- The five worst performing states or districts were Wyoming (56 percent), California (63 percent), Nevada (66 percent), Hawaii (66 percent), and North Dakota (70 percent).
- Point estimates for the rate of SNAP participation increased in 45 states and the District of Columbia among all SNAP eligible people from 2011 to 2012.
- Three states that significantly improved their traditionally low rankings were Colorado, New Jersey, and Indiana, which had ranked fourth, fifth, and tenth worst in 2011 but moved up to 11th, 12th, and 19th worst in 2012, going from 66 to 76 percent, from 67 to 77 percent, and from 71 to 84 percent, respectively.

SNAP participation among the working poor in 2012 was 72 percent, nationally, which is considerably lower than the overall participation rate. Some states that ranked relatively high in reaching SNAP-eligible people overall did poorly in reaching SNAP eligible working-poor people.

- The District of Columbia ranked second worst in reaching the working poor despite being third best in reaching all eligible people.
- Kentucky, Illinois, Massachusetts Vermont, and Rhode Island all had at least a 16 percentage point difference in their overall and working-poor SNAP eligibility rates.
- Point estimates for the rate of SNAP participation increased in 47 states and the District of Columbia among all SNAP eligible working-poor people from FY 2011 to FY 2012.

For the report, and its data for every state, visit [Reaching Those in Need: Estimates of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2012 \(pdf\)](#).

The years referred to in the report and this memo are federal fiscal years (October through September).

**LATE**

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Wednesday, February 25, 2015 9:58 PM  
To: FINTestimony  
Cc: leimomikekina@gmail.com  
Subject: \*Submitted testimony for HB1347 on Feb 26, 2015 11:00AM\*

**HB1347**

Submitted on: 2/25/2015

Testimony for FIN on Feb 26, 2015 11:00AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Leimomi Dierks	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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