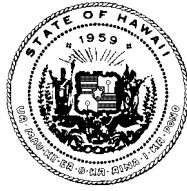


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 4, 2024

To: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1661 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 6, 2024, Time 9:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this bill, provides comments, and requests clarifications. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to increase the monthly income eligibility limit for a supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) applicant or recipient households earning equal to two hundred percent and no more than three hundred percent of the federal poverty level and who meet all other criteria for the United States Department of Agriculture to be eligible for SNAP benefits.

Hawaii's SNAP program is currently utilizing a State option, Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE), to allow for a higher gross income for SNAP eligibility by increasing the federal standard of 130 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 200 percent FPL. However, the SNAP program still requires a net income test as well to determine eligibility and benefit amount depending on the size of the applicant's household. The net income is determined based on allowable deductions, as defined by federal SNAP regulations, applied to the

applicant's countable gross income. The net income eligibility standard is set at 100 percent FPL. For reference, the below chart is an example of the monthly dollar amount of the different FPL percentages for the 2024 federal fiscal year by household size:

Household Size	100 % FPL	130% FPL	200% FPL
1	\$1,398	\$1,817	\$2,796
2	\$1,890	\$2,457	\$3,780
3	\$2,383	\$3,098	\$4,766
4	\$2,875	\$3,738	\$5,750
5	\$3,368	\$4,378	\$6,736

Federal regulations set these income eligibility standards. If the State wishes to utilize standards beyond what the federal government sets, it would be purely a State-funded effort.

The Department is unable to determine the number of applicants at this time that may potentially be eligible for this program as there is no tracking process of the number of households who are not already on SNAP who fall below 300 percent FPL. Therefore, we are unable to determine if the proposed \$50 million annual general fund appropriation figure will be sufficient to meet the demand. DHS is also unsure what would be the recourse should funding be insufficient to meet the demand for this benefit in years when state revenues are limited.

DHS also requests clarification as to whether the proposed state-funded benefit would be accessible to residents who are not U.S. citizens.

In addition to the cost of the benefits, implementation and operating costs would need to be considered. DHS will require an appropriation for system development to carry out this program and additional staffing to accommodate a caseload increase. Additionally, appropriations for an increase in payment transactions, account management, and card issuance by our electronic benefit transfer (EBT) provider are also needed.

This proposed program would also require the development of new rules and administrative processes to determine eligibility for these households in addition to system modifications to the SNAP eligibility system. The Department is currently developing a new

eligibility system. The new eligibility system is scheduled for statewide rollout and implementation in the fall of 2024. System modifications to implement changes proposed in this measure could begin only after the implementation of the new eligibility system and would require the adoption of rules to finalize the system modifications.

DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace budget priorities identified in the executive budget. Further, DHS requests an extended effective date beyond the fall of 2024 to give the agency enough time to make any adjustments to the new eligibility system before developing and implementing this new program.

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



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1661: RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

TO: House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: **Tuesday, 2/6/24; 9:30 am; via Videoconference or Room 329**

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and Members, Committee on Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in Strong Support of HB 1661**, which expands eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to individuals and households whose monthly income is equal to or less than 300% of the federal poverty level, and appropriates funds. I am Rob Van Tassell with Catholic Charities Hawaii. **This bill could be life changing for many working families in Hawaii.**

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy to the most vulnerable of the people in Hawaii. This bill is one of our economic justice priorities.

Food. A basic human necessity. Kids need it to grow strong and healthy. Parents need it to work hard and be productive. Kupuna need it to continue living actively in our community. Many of Hawaii families have insufficient food. SNAP is a godsend for those who qualify. Yet making even \$1 over the current eligibility limit of 200% of the federal poverty level can result in losing hundreds of dollars of food benefits each month. Can you imagine the stress of trying to feed your family with a refrigerator that's often bare?

This bill addresses this basic necessity for those who face that benefit cliff and loss of food security for their families. **Raising the income eligibility to 300% of the federal poverty level would help many families in the ALICE population.** They are struggling with Hawaii's great increases in food costs as well as rent and other necessities. In order to keep its workforce, Hawaii must expand the safety net for food. This bill would provide immediate monthly help with food when individuals and families need it the most.

Take action now! Help our workforce to remain in Hawaii, and give hope for a better and healthier life for their children. We urge your support for HB 1661.

If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson at (808) 527-4813.



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eaumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822  
Phone (808) 527-4813 •





COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

BILL HB1661  
 POSITION: SUPPORT

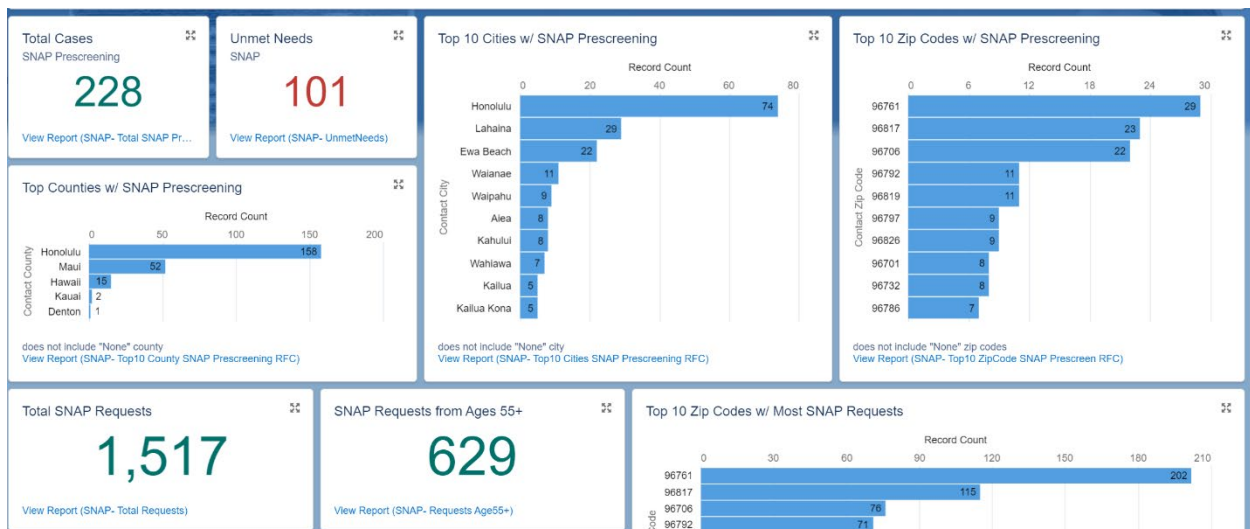
Hearing Date: February 6, 2024, 9:30am

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and Committee Members:

Aloha United Way supports HB1661, which expands eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to households whose monthly income is equal to or less than three hundred percent of the federal poverty level.

Food insecurity has doubled since the pandemic, making 1 in every 6 individuals in our state food insecure. This not only impacts those in poverty, but our ALICE households as well, many of whom do not meet the income requirements for SNAP eligibility. Recent data shows that 44% of our community is living below the ALICE threshold. **ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed**, and refers to households who are employed but whose incomes are not sufficient to meet their basic costs.

Aloha United Way’s 211 Information & Referral call center has been the primary entity conducting SNAP prescreening in our community since FY2018. In 2023 alone, 211 received 1,517 SNAP requests, 629 of which came from kupuna. Of those, 228 were deemed eligible, leaving 1,289 households without access to these benefits.



Increasing SNAP eligibility to 300% of the FPL will allow households to avoid the disastrous benefits cliff that so many are falling into now. Countless SNAP requests are denied for the applicant making “too much”, and yet, Food as a category remains the second highest requested need from callers after affordable housing. This signals that the current limits of 200% of the FPL is simply insufficient to meet the need that this program was designed for.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your action to support Hawaii’s households with this lifesaving program. We urge you to pass HB1661.

Sincerely,



Kayla Keehu- Alexander  
Vice President, Community Impact  
Aloha United Way



Suzanne Skjold  
Chief Operating Officer  
Aloha United Way



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 | Honolulu, HI 96813  
P: 808-533-1292 | e: info@hawaiiifood.com

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**Derek Kurisu**, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*  
**Toby Taniguchi**, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*  
**Joe Carter**, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, *Advisor*  
**Eddie Asato**, Pint Size Hawaii, *Immediate Past Chair*

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TO: Committee on Human Services

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION  
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 6, 2024  
TIME: 9:30am  
PLACE: Room 329

RE: HB1661 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, Members of the Committee,

The simple fact is that many Hawaii families who need assistance do not currently qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Hawaii's high cost of living is a challenge for many families. Recent inflation and other factors have worsened the problem of food insecurity for many here in Hawaii.

This measure would ensure that more Hawaii residents who need food assistance have access to it. This measure would also help eliminate the benefits cliff that forces some families to choose between economic advancement and losing benefits. This benefits cliff disincentivizes career advancement which has a negative impact on our workforce. Eliminating the benefits cliff is a common sense way to may SNAP more functional and equitable.

It's important to note that SNAP does not just benefit SNAP recipients. By injecting consistent and predictable Federal and state funds into our local food systems SNAP helps keep the whole food system stable for all consumers. Support for SNAP is support for Hawaii's entire food system including local farmers, local food and beverage producers and manufacturers, local retailers, and all Hawaii customers.

For these reasons we encourage the Committee to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



## TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

FEBRUARY 6, 2024

### HB 1663, RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

#### POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawaii **supports** HB 1661, relating to the supplemental nutrition assistance program. Pursuant to the “Economic Justice and Labor” section of the official Democratic Party of Hawaii platform, the party “supports government investments of tax revenue in community development, government anti-poverty programs, and the transition to a sustainable, green economy.”

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawaii’s high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of our state’s most economically disadvantaged residents.

Currently, households with incomes above 200 percent of the federal poverty level, as established by the United States Department of Agriculture, are ineligible for SNAP benefits. Yet, these households are still unable to achieve self-sufficiency. As highlighted by the 2023 ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) report, a family of four earning an income of \$69,000 per year is ineligible for SNAP benefits, but needs an income of



over \$100,000 per year to meet its basic needs, including housing and food. If the family earned just \$1,000 less per year, or \$68,000, it would be eligible to receive more than \$9,000 in SNAP benefits.

The 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff, in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Moreover, the SNAP benefits cliff disincentivizes individuals from reaching their greatest earning potential. Families just below the SNAP income eligibility threshold often decline pay increases because the financial benefit of pursuing economic opportunities does not exceed the potential cost of losing SNAP food assistance.

Studies show that SNAP is the most effective anti-hunger initiative in the country. In Hawai'i, the program supports over 130,000 individuals, bringing more than \$630,000,000 into the State's economy each year. Raising the SNAP benefits ceiling to 300 percent of the federal poverty level will help economically vulnerable households meet their basic needs without sacrificing their financial security. This can be done by appropriating state funding to cover the cost of SNAP benefits for families who do not qualify for federal assistance, with households who currently qualify for federal benefits continuing to receive federal aid, just as they do today.

Mahalo nui loa,

**Kris Coffield**

*Co-Chair, Legislative Committee*

(808) 679-7454

kriscoffield@gmail.com

**Abby Simmons**

*Co-Chair, Legislative Committee*

(808) 352-6818

abbyalana808@gmail.com



# HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice  
Support for H.B. 1661 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
House Committee on Human Services  
Tuesday, February 6, 2023, at 9:30AM

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Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **H.B. 1661**, which proposes to utilize state funds to expand eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to households making up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL).

Hawai‘i Appleseed is committed to a more socially and economically just Hawai‘i, where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve economic security and fulfill their potential. The strengthening of SNAP and other safety net programs are critical to achieving this vision. Serving more than 130,000 households and generating \$630 million annually in our state’s local economy, SNAP is an economic lifeline that is failing to reach Hawai‘i’s struggling households.

In a recent assessment of Hawai‘i’s SNAP population, our organization found that the federal income eligibility thresholds are too strict and do not adequately reflect Hawai‘i’s cost of living.<sup>1</sup> A household survival budget for a family of four in Hawai‘i is \$104,000 according to a recent Aloha United Way report.<sup>2</sup> The current SNAP eligibility cut off of 200% FPL (\$69,000 for a family of 4) leaves more than 1450,000 ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households unable to achieve self-sufficiency yet ineligible for any meaningful support to access food in the face of rising costs and stagnant wages.<sup>3</sup>

In light of the rigid federally set requirements, elected officials in places like Washington, D.C. and Oregon are also considering creating state-funded programs to supplement the federal SNAP program to better serve and reach their ineligible, vulnerable populations. The proposed expansion of SNAP eligibility to 300% of the FPL in Hawai‘i aligns with these forward-thinking initiatives and reflects a commitment to addressing the unique economic challenges faced by our residents.

While Appleseed supports the intent of this bill, we would like to note the additional administrative responsibility required by the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services to expand SNAP. We recommend that any appropriation of funds reflects the need for any support for additional administrative staff, technical upgrades, or training for existing eligibility workers.

Thank you for considering these comments in your deliberation of H.B. 1661. SNAP is one of our most important safety nets and also provides a significant stimulus to Hawai‘i’s local economy. A targeted approach to strengthening this program will be an enormous boost for all Hawai‘i residents.

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<sup>1</sup> Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. Hawai‘i SNAP: Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Food Security for Hawai‘i Residents, January 2023.

<sup>2</sup> [2023 ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Hawai‘i](#)

<sup>3</sup> [2023 ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Hawai‘i](#)



**HIPHI Board**

- Misty Pacheco, DrPH  
*Chair*  
*University of Hawai'i at Hilo*
- Titiimaea Ta'ase, JD  
*Secretary*  
*State of Hawai'i, Deputy Public Defender*
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*Na'au Healing Center*
- Debbie Erskine  
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- Kathleen Roche, MS, RN, CENP  
*Kaiser Permanente*
- Dina Shek, JD  
*Medical-Legal Partnership For Children in Hawai'i*
- Garret Sugai  
*HMSA*
- JoAnn Tsark, MPH  
*John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native Hawaiian Research Office*

**HIPHI Initiatives**

- Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i
- Community-Based Research & Evaluation
- Community Health Worker Initiatives
- COVID-19 Response
- Environmental Health
- Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions
- Hawai'i Farm to School Hui
- Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition
- Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui
- Healthy Eating + Active Living
- Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging & Community Living
- Public Health Workforce Development

Date: February 5, 2024

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Human Services

Re: HB 1661 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

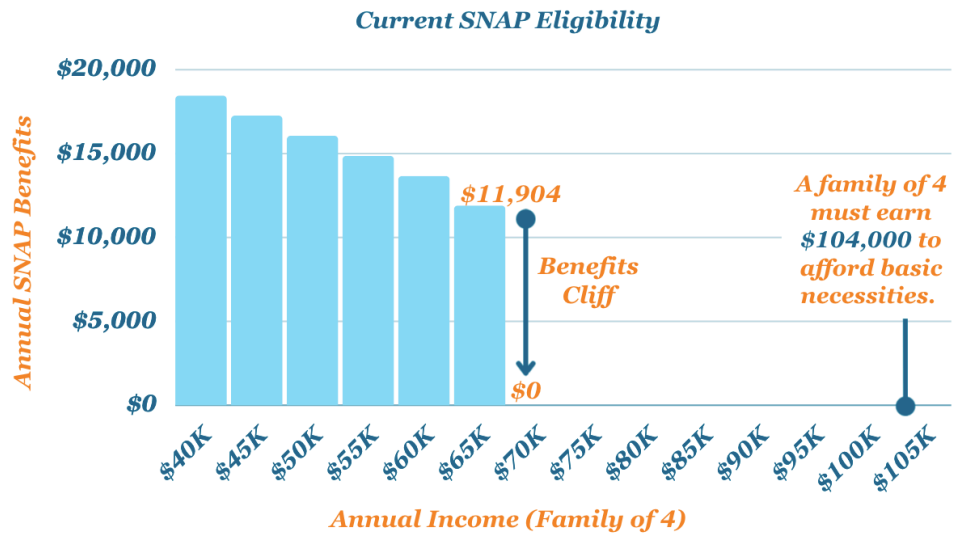
Hrg: Tuesday, February 6, 2024 9:30 AM

Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Institute<sup>i</sup> appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **Support of HB1661**, which would expand SNAP benefits to those with incomes up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.

**Helping ALICE Families**

Expanding the SNAP income threshold to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) will help the more than 150,000 people<sup>ii</sup> who earn too much to qualify for SNAP, but too little to afford their basic needs. These families need assistance to make ends meet but are not getting it.

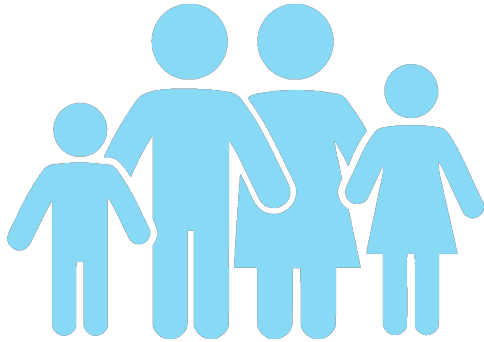
In Hawai'i, a family of 4 needs to earn more than \$104,000 to survive financially. In order for that family of 4 to qualify for benefits, their income cannot exceed 200% of the FPL which is about \$69,000.<sup>iii</sup> Providing SNAP benefits to these "gap" households--with incomes between \$69,000 and \$103,000 for a family of 4--will help them survive. They will have enough money to afford healthy and nutritious groceries.



### Worse off Earning More

SNAP-eligible families who earn just below 200% of the FPL are faced with a no-win decision. They need to earn more to be comfortable, but the system currently discourages them from increasing their income. Because the moment they earn more than \$69,000 they lose all of their SNAP benefits. This loss equates to more than \$10,000 annually.

After-tax spending power for an average family of 4 earning \$65,000 and receiving SNAP benefits is roughly \$64,000. Compare that to a family of 4 making \$70,000 who is ineligible for SNAP benefits and has after-tax spending power of only \$56,000.



<b>Cost of Living for a Family of 4:</b>	\$104,000
<b>Parent #1 wage:</b>	\$14.00 per hour
<b>Parent #2 wage:</b>	\$17.25 per hour
<b>Annual Income:</b>	\$65,000
<b>SNAP Benefits:</b>	\$12,000
<b>After-tax Spending Power:</b>	\$64,000

<b>Cost of Living for a Family of 4:</b>	\$104,000
<b>Parent #1 wage:</b>	\$16.50 per hour
<b>Parent #2 wage:</b>	\$17.25 per hour
<b>Annual Income:</b>	\$70,000
<b>SNAP Benefits:</b>	\$0
<b>After-tax Spending Power:</b>	\$56,000

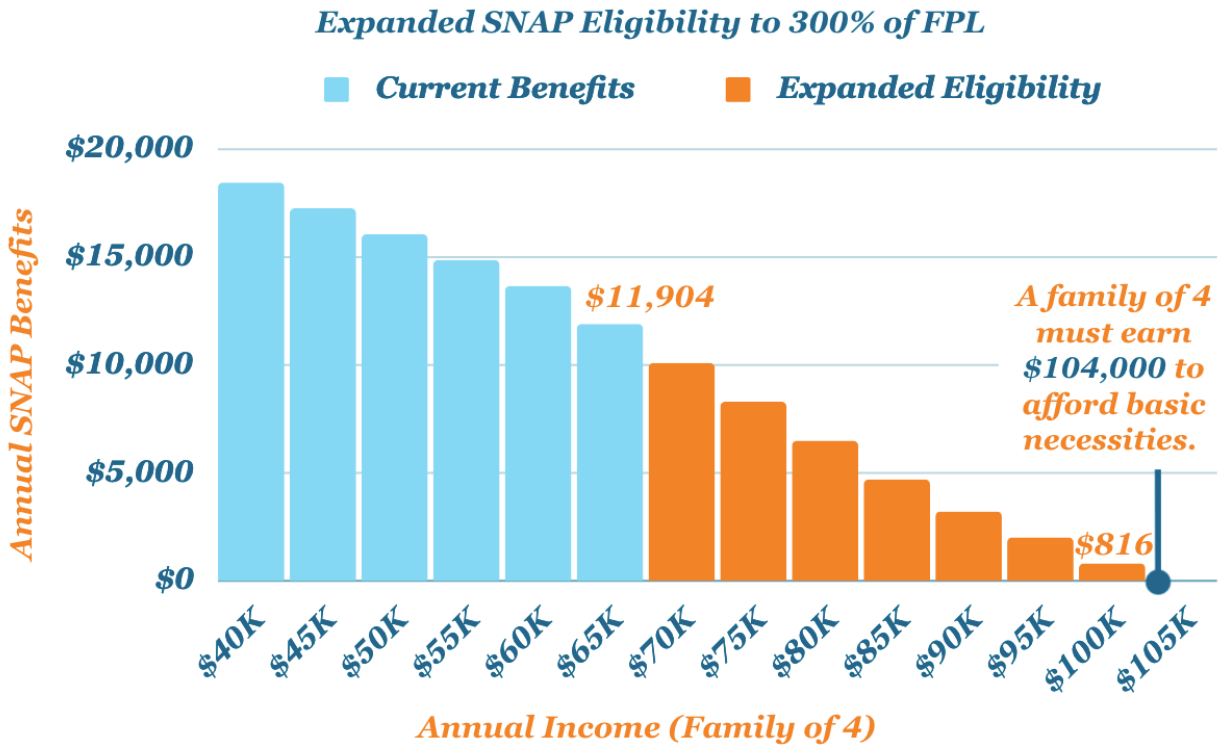
A SNAP participant earning \$14 per hour needs to receive more than a 50% raise (\$21 per hour) to not lose out on a substantial amount of liveable income. A raise of any less than that would cost them more money because they would lose their SNAP benefits. This sudden loss of benefits is referred to as the “SNAP Cliff”.

If, that employee did not get a 50% raise, they would need to work an additional 22 hours per week to not be worse off financially after falling off the SNAP benefits cliff. That means 22 more hours away from their children with absolutely no financial benefit, effectively working for \$0 per hour.

No one would choose to work extra hours or receive pay raises if it ultimately costs them money and puts them into a worse financial situation than when they earned a lower salary. This massive SNAP benefits cliff results in a large portion of the population being discouraged from increasing their earnings.

## Building a Pathway out of Poverty

Once SNAP benefits are expanded to serve those who earn 300% of the FPL, working families can take advantage of opportunities for raises and to work extra hours. Hawai'i can begin building a pathway for residents that leads out of poverty rather than keeping them trapped in situations that have no realistic, financially feasible way to move out of low income.



## Increased Health and Prosperity

By expanding SNAP eligibility, we can increase the health and well-being of our population. Food insecurity affects more than 1 in 6 local residents and results in higher risks of heart disease, stress, depression, and other chronic diseases.<sup>iv</sup> Our population will be better off if they know where their next meal is coming from. HB 1661 can help make this a reality.

Sincerely,

Nate Hix

Social Impact Policy Manager  
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

<sup>i</sup> The Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, formerly known as the Obesity Prevention Task Force, was created by the legislature in 2012 and is comprised of over 60 statewide organizations. The HEAL Coalition works to make recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and health care environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT1Y2022.B17002?q=poverty%20ratio&g=040XX00US15>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/snap/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/what-are-the-implications-of-food-insecurity-for-health-and-health-care/>



February 6, 2024

Members of the House Committee on Human Services:

Chair Lisa Marten

Vice Chair Terez Amato

Rep. Della Au Belatti

Rep. Greggor Ilagan

Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi

Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi

Rep. Diamond Garcia

**LATE**

Re: HB1661 Relating to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the House Committee on Human Services:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters. On behalf of HSCADV and our 27 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in **support of HB1661**.

Survivors of domestic violence face many challenges when making decisions about their safety. One of the most crucial factors is their finances. The ability to provide for themselves and their families is a key economic consideration for survivors when deciding to leave an abusive partner. It's also important to recognize the impact that financial abuse can have on survivors and to support them in any way possible, including the ability to take full advantage of safety net programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Survivors of domestic violence are among the many low-income households that need help to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which a household earns an additional \$1 per month can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year.

Please pass HB 1661, ensuring that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families and survivors.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

To: House Committee on Human Services  
Re: **HB 1661 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**  
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference  
February 6, 2024, 9:30 AM

**LATE**

**LATE**

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB 1661**. This bill expands eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to include any individual or household whose monthly income is equal to or less than three hundred per cent of the federal poverty level.

According to Feeding America, more than 50,000 – or one in six – Hawai'i children are facing hunger.<sup>1</sup> It is well established that the stresses of childhood poverty have both immediate and long-term effects on keiki's physical and mental health, behavioral self-control, academic achievement, and earnings as adults.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, a single parent with one child needed to earn nearly \$70,000 per year – or over \$5,800 per month – in order to be “self sufficient” in our state in 2022.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, our state's current income eligibility cutoff to qualify for SNAP for a family of two is \$3,780 per month.<sup>4</sup> In Hawai'i, nearly two-thirds of SNAP participants are in families with children.<sup>5</sup>

This bill would raise SNAP's income eligibility limit closer to our own state's self-sufficiency standard, which would help relieve the stresses of food insecurity and poverty that threaten our keiki's well-being and futures.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,  
Nicole Woo  
Director of Research and Economic Policy

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hawaii>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/indicator/2014/06/childhood-poverty>

<sup>3</sup> [https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/reports/self-sufficiency/self-sufficiency\\_2022.pdf](https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/reports/self-sufficiency/self-sufficiency_2022.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/snap/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap\\_factsheet\\_hawaii.pdf](https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_hawaii.pdf)

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/3/2024 9:42:17 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Zahava Zaidoff	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee members,

I am writing in strong support of this bill. I can tell you from personal experience that myself and my family have lost SNAP benefits because I covered one shift for a coworker when they had Covid, and I was over the monthly income limit by \$23.

Eliminating the cliff, and expanding the percentage to 300% would be life changing for my family, as well as for many in my community. I would love to say yes to more hours at my job, but have been hesitant because losing almost \$700 a month in benefits has not been worth it.

Passing this bill will allow us the dignity to work without fear of not having enough.

Mahalo for making a change and an investment in the working families of Hawaii!

Zahava Zaidoff

HD5



**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/4/2024 7:21:14 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1661. Please pass this bill.

Mike Golojuch, Sr.

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/4/2024 11:00:48 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lea Minton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1661. Please pass HB 1661, which will ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families. It's imperative that we have a system that still supports families despite making a few dollars over the cut off.

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/4/2024 11:27:11 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dawn Morais Webster Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

No one should go hungry. Yet many do. Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Please pass HB 1661, which will ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families.

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 12:19:50 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of HB1661. Mahalo for your consideration.

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 5:50:58 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

I am in support of HB 1661. This will help a lot of our families with children here on Hawai'i Island. It will definitely help our family as well. We are just barely making it financially

Mahalo nui loa

Leilani Kailiawa

Send DataSend Data

Send DataSend Data

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 6:35:14 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marjorie Maertens	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the House Committee on Human Services,

I am writing in strong support of HB 1661. SNAP benefits are an absolute necessity for many families in Hawaii. The cost of living here is one of the highest in the nation. Since the onset of the pandemic the cost of food has risen sharply only adding to the high cost of living in Hawaii. Increasing the SNAP benefit ceiling to 300% of the federal poverty level would bring some much needed relief for countless families that do not currently qualify but are financially and food insecure.

I'm a single mother of two, I work full-time, and I am currently putting myself through graduate school at UH Manoa. My salary as a DOE office assistant coupled with the child support I get makes it so that I just barely do not qualify for SNAP benefits. I have met others like myself that are just barely over the threshold but struggle to make ends meet and live paycheck to paycheck. It is time that SNAP benefits expand to meet the rising costs of food and the increase in families that need assistance.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony,

Marjorie Maertens

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 7:07:15 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support.

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Please pass HB 1661, which will ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families.

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 9:00:57 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gwen Rodrigues	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Measure HB1663**

**Hearing Date 2/6/24 2pm**

**Committee JHA**

**HB1661**

**Hearing Date 2/6/24 9:30am**

**Committee HUS**

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Please pass HB 1661, which will ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families.

Gwen Rodrigues



**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 9:21:03 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Daphne Barbee-Wooten	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. It expands food supplement to more needy families. There are many homeless families and children whose only meal is what schools provide. In Hawai'i, the Aloha State, this saddens me. We as a state should do what we can to help by providing nutritious food for the hungry children at schools. I support this Bill.

**LATE**

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 10:12:53 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John Witeck	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP program is a vital source of assistance supporting over 130,000 individuals in Hawaii. It needs to be redesigned some per HB 1661 so as to not exclude individuals over the current thresholds or cause an extreme benefits cut-off.

We must make sure that SNAP can continue to ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities will be accessible to our local working families. Please pass HB 1661.

**LATE**

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 10:13:49 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Please pass HB 1661, which will ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families.

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES  
Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair  
Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
HEARING **HB1661**  
DATE: Tuesday, February 6, 2024  
TIME: 9:30 a.m.

**LATE**

Bill No. HB1661

POSITION: **STRONG SUPPORT**

I am in strong support of HB1661. Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents.

The purpose of this bill in its current form is to eliminate the income "cliff" in which if a recipient earns an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year.

This policy as it is currently enforced causes more harm to the overall effect of a family or individual on SNAP benefits. There Luckily some models can be considered. New laws in the ACA (Affordable Care Act) in which the federal government has instituted a policy whereby, families and individuals that qualify for ACA subsidies should their income increase up to 400% FPL (Federal Poverty Line<sup>1</sup>), slight adjustments are made to their subsidies until their income surpasses the federal poverty line. There is no "cliff" in a complete loss of benefits as with the SNAP Program as it's currently administered here in Hawaii. Likewise, we could follow a similar model as the ACA by amending current SNAP benefits policies so that families and individuals on SNAP are not met with a traumatic event as completely losing their benefits over earning one dollar.

In summation, I am in support of HB1661 and request that this bill pass out of this committee and that all changes to this bill should be in keeping with the introducer's intent. The passage of this bill will increase the peace of mind of recipients of these benefits and fiscally it is a prudent allocation of state resources.

Mahalo,

Ken Farm

Chair Emeritus,  
Former Chair Neighborhood Board No. 15  
Speaking in my personal capacity,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>  
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-01-19/pdf/2023-00995.pdf>

**LATE**

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 12:18:49 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Please pass HB 1661, which will ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families.



**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 1:14:46 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
RoAnn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my support for HB 1661, the SNAP Cliff Bill, which proposes a vital and compassionate adjustment to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This bill, aimed at addressing the SNAP cliff, demonstrates a thoughtful and innovative approach to supporting individuals and families on their path to economic stability.

By increasing SNAP eligibility from 200% to 300% of the federal poverty limit (FPL), HB 1661 takes a significant step towards ensuring that those in need can access crucial nutritional assistance. This expansion not only recognizes the challenges faced by individuals hovering near the poverty line but also acknowledges the importance of providing a safety net as people strive to improve their economic circumstances.

Moreover, the introduction of a gradual phase-out rather than an abrupt cut-off of SNAP benefits is a great feature of this bill. This approach offers a smoother transition for recipients as their income rises, removing the disincentives often associated with sudden benefit reductions. The gradual program promotes self-sufficiency and encourages individuals to pursue better employment opportunities without the fear of losing essential support.

In supporting HB 1661, you contribute to the creation of a more just and equitable society where access to nutrition is not abruptly cut off, but instead, individuals are supported in their journey towards financial independence. I urge you to champion the passage of this bill, recognizing its potential to make a lasting and positive impact on the lives of many.

**LATE**

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 1:59:45 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Patti Hatzistavrakis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Patti Hatzistavrakis, fully support Bill 1661 HB RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. I support this bill because I have seen the impacts of losing SNAP benefits. In one instance, while working at a local retail outlet, a coworker refused a promotion to retain their SNAP benefits. In another situation, a friend, and local farmers market vendor, lost their benefits after their income increased slightly over the threshold. This caused their family great hardship, as they tried to make up the difference. Lastly, another friend received a job offer, which would result in the loss of SNAP benefits. This person was under the impression that a gradual decline in benefits would occur, as they steadily increased their income each month. To their surprise, they lost benefits the very next month. Given these examples, I support 1661 HB RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM to enable our community members to accept increases in pay and take on additional work hours to make it possible to earn their way out of poverty. Providing this safety net would improve food security and health outcomes as well as foster local economic growth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and share my position and experience. I appreciate your consideration of Bill 1661 HB.

**LATE**

**HB-1661**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 3:38:18 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tamara Paltin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1661, this bill aimed at addressing the SNAP cliff, demonstrates a thoughtful and innovative approach to supporting individuals and families on their path to economic stability.