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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

February 7, 2023

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

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 782 – RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES.**

Hearing: Thursday, February 9, 2023, Time 9:00 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 clarification. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: The bill's purpose is to authorize health care providers, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and faith-based organizations to distribute supplemental nutrition assistance program applications to prospective applicants.

The Department appreciates the intent of this bill as it supports the residents' access to available nutrition assistance and the State's efforts to increase SNAP participation. Notably, as part of the pandemic response, the Department developed an online application for financial assistance programs and SNAP. The online application is available at the Department's Public Assistance Information System (PAIS) at <https://pais-benefits.dhs.hawaii.gov/>. Paper applications are still available.

However, the Department requests clarification of the proposed criteria when identifying “prospective applicants.” The Department recommends that SNAP applications be made available for anyone interested in applying for the benefit rather than limiting it to those that may prospectively be eligible for the benefit.

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



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The State Legislature
House Committee on Human Services
Thursday, February 9, 2023
Conference Room 329
9:00 a.m.

TO: The Honorable John Mizuno, Chair
RE: Support for H.B. 782 Relating to Human Services

Aloha Chair Mizuno and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keali'i Lopez and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization that advocates for individuals age 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and nearly 140,000 in Hawaii. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families, including transportation.

AARP **supports H.B. 782** which authorizes health care providers, nonprofit organizations, businesses and faith-based organizations to distribute supplemental nutrition assistance Program (SNAP) applications to prospective applicants.

SNAP benefits are a crucial ingredient in the food budgets for many Hawaii residents especially kūpuna. In Hawaii, 3.9 % - more than 20,000 adults 50+ [are food insecure \(as of 2020\)](#)—meaning they lack consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle due to inadequate financial resources.¹ Food assistance for low-income older adults is essential; food insecurity has significant negative impacts on older adults, particularly on their health. Older adults who are food insecure are more likely than their food-secure counterparts to have limitations on activities of daily living, have conditions like diabetes and depression, and experience heart attacks.

Research shows that SNAP enrollment among older adults is associated with fewer hospital and emergency room visits and long-term care admissions. Enrolling in SNAP can also lead to increased well-being, especially among older adults. Even so, participation in SNAP among eligible older adults is low, despite the program's benefits. While hunger is a daily reality for millions of older adults, many don't enroll in SNAP for a variety of reasons - A 2022 report from AARP and Mathematica estimates that 16 million—or over 60 percent of—eligible adults ages 50 and older were not enrolled in the program in FY 2018. Reasons for the low participation

rate include, social isolation and disconnection from resources, a confusing application process, and barriers such as discomfort with technology.

Many older adults may also simply not know they are eligible for the program. Allowing trusted organizations to distribute and assist with program applications can help improve participation and access rates and ensure those who need help the most are able to access it.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify in support for **H.B. 782**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keali'i S. López". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "L" and "P".

Keali'i S. López
State Director

¹ AARP Fact Sheet (March 2022): "Over 9 Million Adults Ages 50 and Older Faced Food Insecurity in 2020"

HB-782

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 6:29:42 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/9/2023 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Because of Hawai‘i’s high cost of living and food prices, many low-income households struggle to purchase food. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a crucial means of providing necessary assistance in the purchasing of food for some of Hawai‘i’s most disadvantaged residents.

In fiscal year 2019, 157,000 Hawai‘i residents participated in SNAP—roughly one in nine Hawai‘i residents. While Hawai‘i secures hundreds of millions of dollars annually in SNPA funding, a 2017 report by the United States Department of Agriculture ranked Hawai‘i 27th among states in the percentage of eligible individuals who participate in the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

If additional eligible individuals participated in the supplemental nutrition assistance program, the state could receive increased federal funding. And Moody’s Analytics estimates that every \$1 drawn down in SNAP program funds can generate \$1.70 in local economic activity.

Many individuals who are eligible to participate in SNAP do not participate because they are unaware of the program’s existence or of their eligibility. Authorizing health care providers, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and faith-based organizations to distribute supplemental nutrition assistance program applications to those in need may increase participation in the supplemental nutrition assistance program. Please support HB782.

HB-782

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 7:24:24 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/9/2023 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hunter Heavilin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill provides a crucial opportunity to reach more people in need of food assistance, especially those who may not be aware of their eligibility for SNAP.

By allowing these trusted organizations to distribute applications, the state of Hawaii can expand access to this vital safety net program. This will ultimately reduce hunger and improve the health and well-being of our communities. Moreover, this bill will also provide a cost-effective solution to reach more eligible people, as these organizations already serve vulnerable populations and are well positioned to distribute information about SNAP.