

JOSH GREEN, MD.
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

February 7, 2023

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

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 740 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

Hearing: 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 and an extended effective date. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to establish an additional minimum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit of \$250 per month per person for SNAP eligible households whose income is below two hundred per cent of the federal poverty level, as established by the United States Department of Agriculture. Requires that SNAP-eligible households whose monthly income exceeds two hundred per cent of the federal poverty level receive a graduated decline of additional SNAP benefits. Requires state general funds to be used to supplement the cost of the additional benefits. Appropriates funds.

The Department appreciates the Legislature's efforts to address the financial hardships of individuals and families in Hawaii by ensuring that they have the means to access healthy and nutritious foods to provide meals for themselves and their families.

In Section 2, the bill proposes a benefit of \$250 per month per person for SNAP-eligible households. The current monthly average number of individuals receiving SNAP in the State is 158,450. Therefore, to implement this measure, DHS projects the Legislature will need to appropriate \$39,612,500 per month or \$475,350,000 annually.

In addition, the Legislature will need to appropriate general funds to cover the proposed additional benefits for households whose monthly income is above two hundred per cent of the federal poverty level. Finally, DHS will need an appropriation to make the necessary program and system changes to accommodate these new benefit programs and correctly cost-allocate staff and system time in carrying out a state-funded program.

DHS also requests clarification as to whether the state-funded program will be available to Hawaii residents who are not US citizens. Currently, the federally funded SNAP program is only available to US Citizens.

If the measure passes, DHS respectfully requests that the effective date is after or later than December 31, 2023, to give DHS time to make the necessary program and system changes and develop administrative processes and rules.

DHS will update the resources needed to implement this measure as the session progresses.

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



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for H.B. 740 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
House Committee on Human Services
Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 9:00AM

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

Hawai‘i Appleseed supports the intent of **H.B. 740**, which would provide an additional cash benefit for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)-eligible households whose income is below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). The bill would also require that households whose monthly income exceeds 200 percent of the FPL receive a graduated decline of these additional benefits.

In a recent assessment of Hawai‘i’s SNAP population, our organization found that a) the amount of SNAP benefits that households receive is inadequate to cover the cost of food in Hawai‘i, and b) income eligibility thresholds are too strict, leaving many struggling households without any benefits at all.¹

While it is true that SNAP is only intended to supplement a household’s food budget, respondents we spoke with for the purposes of the assessment told us this is not usually the case:

“[Even with my SNAP benefits] I would need to choose between the food and the bills. Only because with my income...at the end of paying all the bills, I think I have like \$200 left. And that would either be for food or gas for the car.” ~Hawai‘i SNAP recipient

This bill would increase the minimum benefit that households receive from \$43 (which would barely cover a month’s worth of milk and eggs) to \$250 per person, per month.

In addition, this bill would provide a graduated decline once the 200 percent of FPL threshold is exceeded, avoiding the severe dropoff that could be experienced when households get even a small increase in salary. The original FPL calculations (upon which SNAP eligibility is determined) assumed that a household would spend one-third of its budget on food. In Hawai‘i, the reality is that a family of four following the Thrifty Food Plan would spend \$1,794.60 per month on food—a full two-thirds of the net income limit for a family of four.

There appears to be a typo on page 3, line 15 of the bill. We would like to request that the committee amend the word “above” to “below,” to preserve the bill’s intent. Subsection 2(b) should read, *“The additional benefits established in subsection (a) shall apply to a household whose monthly income is **below** two hundred percent of the federal poverty level, as established by the USDA, and meets all other SNAP eligibility requirements; provided that for every \$1 earned in excess of the two hundred percent poverty level, the household’s benefit shall decrease by 20 cents per person.”*

¹ 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.

While Appleseed supports the intent of this bill, we would like to note that it would be a significant administrative burden on DHS. We recommend that any appropriation allows ample support for additional administrative staff, technical upgrades, and training for existing eligibility workers.

Thank you for considering these comments and suggested amendments in your deliberation of H.B. 740. SNAP is one of our most important safety nets and also provides a significant stimulus to Hawai'i's local food economy. Strengthening this program by ensuring benefits are adequate and extended to more households will be an enormous boost for Hawai'i residents.



Food+ Policy Internship 2023

food@purplemaia.org

February 7, 2023

To: Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Amato and the House Committee on Human Services

Subject: HB 740, Relating To Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Aloha Hawai'i State Legislators,

We are writing in strong support for HB 740. This bill increases SNAP benefits for households whose income is below two hundred per cent of the federal poverty level. The federal poverty level is a woefully low bar relative to cost of living at this time. MIT defines a living wage in Honolulu for a single adult to be \$22.72/hour

(<https://livingwage.mit.edu/resources/Living-Wage-Users-Guide-Technical-Documentation-2022-05-10.pdf>). For comparison, the federal poverty level is \$7.51/hour – that's only a third of the money needed to meet basic needs like childcare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and other necessities. HB 740 addresses this huge gap and ensures that everyone has access to adequate nutrition and the ability to meet their basic needs.

SNAP is a crucial safety net for thousands of households in Hawaii; however, the benefits allocated today do not go far enough to provide healthy and convenient foods. By increasing the benefits for those in need, this bill helps to bridge the gap between poverty and stability, allowing individuals and families to focus on other important aspects of their lives such as education, work, and healthcare.

Mahalo,

Mahalo,

Tierra Bartolotti & the Food+ Policy Team

#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2023, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students from throughout the UH System. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



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facebook.com/AARPHawaii

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. 740 Relating to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

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. 740** which establishes an additional minimum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit of \$250 per month per person for SNAP-eligible households whose income is below two hundred percent of the federal poverty level.

Older workers and retirees living on a fixed income already know all too well that inflation and rising food prices are stretching household budgets in ways that make it harder to put food on the table. Some of them may face life challenges as they age—such as experiencing a medical crisis, job loss, or death of a spouse or other loved one—that may result in financial instability and make it difficult to afford food. For example, newly widowed older adults experience higher poverty rates, greater housing cost burdens, and challenges to getting the help they need. 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

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are a crucial ingredient in the food budgets for many Hawaii residents especially kūpuna. 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.

As inflation continues driving up the costs of groceries and other necessities, programs like SNAP that help eligible older adults are especially important. SNAP benefits increase food security and reduce monthly food costs. Further Increasing these benefits can help ensure low-income kūpuna have the resources they need.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify in support for **H.B. 740**.

Sincerely,


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”



House Committee on Human Services

February 9, 2023 - 9:00 a.m.

Testimony Re: H.B. 740: Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Dear Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 740, which would establish a minimum monthly benefit for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligible households with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The bill would also provide financial assistance to households with income above the 200 percent FPL, with a graduated decline of benefits as income increased.

SNAP is a federally funded anti-hunger program that provides monthly benefits to help qualifying residents purchase food. Individuals participating in SNAP often experience food insecurity because their household lacks consistent access to enough food to live a healthy life. SNAP is a nationally recognized public program that plays a critical role in reducing hunger, malnutrition, and poverty to more than 12% of Hawai'i's households.

The federal government, utilizing the outdated Thrifty Food Plan, determines the minimum and maximum monthly allotments. This means that current SNAP allotments do not cover the real cost of purchasing quality, nutritious foods in a high cost of living state like Hawai'i. Other high cost of living areas, like Washington D.C., have passed legislation to dedicate state funding to raise monthly allotments and fill in the gap between Thrifty Food Plan estimates and the true cost of adequate, nutritious meals for low-income households.

Aloha Harvest

City and County of Honolulu - Office of Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resiliency

County of Hawai'i

Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development

Hawai'i Appleseed

Hawai'i Children's Action Network

Hawai'i Food Bank

Hawai'i Good Food Alliance

Hawai'i Public Health Institute

Kōkua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center

Lanakila Pacific

Malama Kaua'i

Maui Food Bank

Parents and Children Together

The Hawai'i Food Basket

Supersistence

Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center



Aloha Harvest

City and County of Honolulu - Office of
Climate Change, Sustainability, and
Resiliency

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Economic Development

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Center

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Maui Food Bank

Parents and Children Together

The Hawai'i Food Basket

Supersistence

Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health
Center

Additionally, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in over \$2,900 in SNAP benefits lost per year for a single adult. This directly impacts our 1 in 3 asset limited, income constrained, employed (ALICE) households that struggle to make ends meet, but make too much to receive meaningful financial assistance. This bill would provide a lifeline to families both under and above 200 percent FPL in this time of rising costs and stagnant wages.

Lastly, improving monthly allotments is only one component of improving access to food security in Hawai'i. With this needed support for Hawai'i's working families and low-income households, the Department of Human services will also need staffing and administrative support to strive to efficiently and effectively administer these benefits to those that need them. When Hawai'i residents encounter delays, miscommunications, or language barriers, they are further distanced from the resources they need to thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Hawai'i Hunger Action Network is composed of advocates statewide dedicated to connecting communities and taking action to ensure all people in Hawai'i have enough food to live healthy, dignified, productive lives.



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COVID-19 Response

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

Date: February 9, 2023

To: Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Human Services

Re: Support

Hrg: Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 9:00 AM, Conf Rm 329

The Hawai'i Public Health Instituteⁱ is in **Support of HB740**, which creates a gradual decline in benefits for those households with income above the SNAP cliff at 200% of the federal poverty line, ending the dramatic penalty households receive once they earn more than that threshold. It will also increase the minimum SNAP benefits for eligible households to \$250 per person. These changes are vital for providing support to the many families in need.

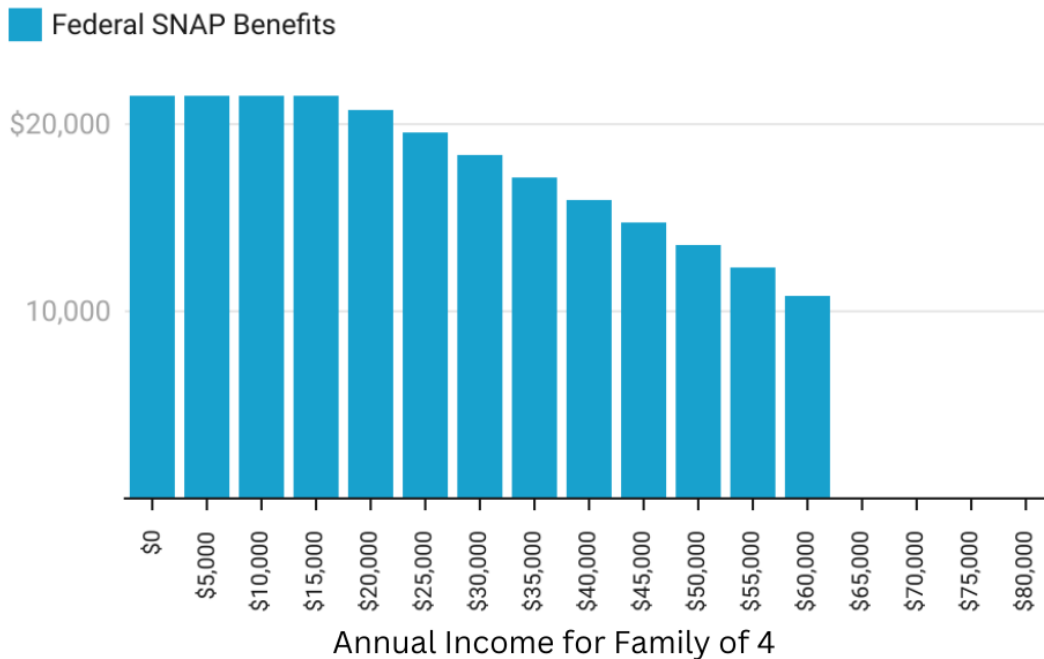
Too many ALICE Households without Sufficient Support

The ALICE report shows us that 1 in 3 familiesⁱⁱ are below a level of self-sufficiency but above the poverty line. Some of these families can receive SNAP benefits, helping support their ability to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. However, tens of thousands fall above the SNAP cliff at 200% of the federal poverty line and receive no support. Families of 4 need \$90,000 to be self-sufficient, but SNAP benefits end once families earn a mere \$64,000.

SNAP is the most effective program for ending hunger, but it's currently not robust enough to help all in need here in Hawai'i. Benefits need to be extended to those above the 200% poverty line.

Families in Hawai'i Face Massive SNAP Benefits Cliff

Earning just \$1 more than \$63,828 per year could result in over \$10,000 lost in SNAP benefits for a family of four



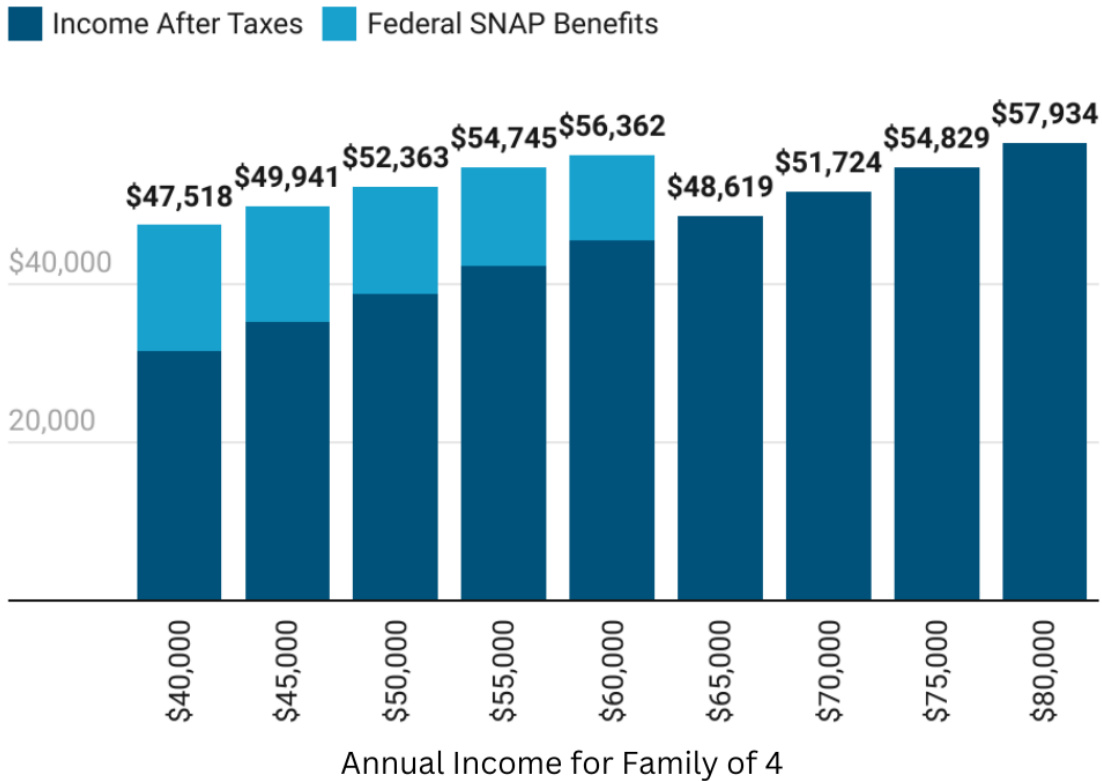
Large SNAP Cliff Penalizes Those Who Earn More

The existing SNAP cliff at the 200% federal poverty line creates a significant penalty for those families and individuals with incomes just above that line. A family of 4 who earns \$65,000 will have roughly \$48,600 of income after taxes.ⁱⁱⁱ That is significantly less than a family of 4 who earns \$60,000 because their after-tax income will be approximately \$45,500. They will also receive close to \$11,000 in SNAP benefits.^{iv} The family who makes \$5,000 more will have \$8,000 less to spend.

This penalty for families with higher incomes spans an extensive range. A family earning \$65,000 will have less money than a family earning just \$45,000. This hefty SNAP penalty can be remedied if we gradually extend benefits for those above the SNAP cliff. Workers will not face declining purchasing power despite making more money if this policy is implemented.

Steep SNAP Cliff in Hawai'i Results In Families Losing Money Despite Earning More

A family of 4 earning \$65,000 per year will have less money to spend than if they earned \$45,000.



Income after taxes is calculated after FICA and state and federal income tax estimates.

SNAP Investment Will Multiply Throughout Our Economy

Increasing SNAP benefits for those beyond the 200% federal poverty line will give the state a large return on investment. SNAP benefits immediately help the beneficiaries, allowing them to increase their purchases. This money will then be used throughout Hawaii's economy benefiting local businesses and employees. For every extra dollar in SNAP benefits given to local beneficiaries, over \$1.50 will be spent throughout the economy.^v

Current SNAP Benefits Can be Too Low for Those Currently Eligible

Depending on a household's income, housing costs, age, and childcare costs, the benefits they receive can vary dramatically. Even for those with incomes below the 200% poverty threshold, SNAP benefits can fall to less than \$50 per month per person. These people are still in significant need of help but need help getting it.

Moving the minimum dollar amount up to \$250 per month will ensure that many more people are getting closer to what they need to survive.

Benefits Should Decline Gradually

The intent of this bill is fantastic. To better implement the policy, we suggest a minor amendment. The last line of section 2 says, "provided that for every \$1 earned in excess of the two hundred percent poverty level, the household's benefit shall decrease by 20 cents per person." Since benefits would decline by 20 cents per person, a family of 5 would lose a dollar in benefits for every additional dollar they earn. This structure would be of no benefit to them. The "per person" at the end should be removed and read "per household." Therefore the benefits will only decrease by 20 cents per household for every additional dollar earned.

Mahalo,



Nate Hix
Food Access Policy and Advocacy Coordinator
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

ⁱ The Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i (Coalition) is a program of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI) dedicated to reducing tobacco use through education, policy, and advocacy. With more than two decades of history in Hawai'i, the Coalition has led several campaigns on enacting smoke-free environments, including being the first state in the nation to prohibit the sale of tobacco and electronic smoking devices to purchasers under 21 years of age.

ⁱⁱ https://www.auw.org/sites/default/files/pictures/2020ALICEReport_HI_FINAL.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://smartasset.com/taxes/income-taxes#HRuvmVdm3u>

^{iv} <https://www.snapscreener.com/>

^v https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/93529/err265_summary.pdf



KAPI'OLANI
PALI MOMI
STRAUB
WILCOX

Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 9:00AM
Via Video Conference; Conference Room 329

House Committee on Human Services

To: Representative John Mizuno, Chair
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

From: Michael Robinson
Vice President, Government Relations & Community Affairs

Re: **Testimony in Support of HB 740
Relating To The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

My name is Michael Robinson, and I am the Vice President of Government Relations & Community Affairs at Hawai'i Pacific Health. Hawai'i Pacific Health is a not-for-profit health care system comprised of its four medical centers – Kapi'olani, Pali Momi, Straub and Wilcox and over 70 locations statewide with a mission of creating a healthier Hawai'i.

HPH writes in SUPPORT of HB 740 which establishes an additional minimum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit of \$250 per month per person for qualifying SNAP-eligible households. The bill also requires that SNAP-eligible households whose monthly income exceeds two hundred per cent of the federal poverty level receive a graduated decline of additional SNAP benefits, and requires state funds to be used to supplement the cost of the additional benefits.

HPH recognizes the strong connection between access to healthy foods with health and wellness. Adults who eat a healthy diet live longer and have a lower risk of obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. Healthy eating can help people with chronic diseases manage these conditions and avoid complications. However, many low income families continue to struggle to put food on the table.

HPH has supported the Double Up food bucks program since 2019 to both foster strengthening local food systems and allow SNAP recipients to access good nutrition. The program has been successful in encouraging SNAP recipients to make healthy food choices. Providing an additional minimum benefit of \$250 per month per person for households eligible for SNAP who have incomes below the two hundred per cent federal poverty level, as established by the United States Department of Agriculture, and providing additional assistance to households whose incomes are too high to qualify for SNAP benefits by expanding SNAP eligibility beyond the two hundred per cent federal poverty line will greatly benefit low income households to obtain the foods they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



February 9, 2023

Rep. John Mizuno, Chair
Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services

RE: Testimony in support of HB 740, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

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

On behalf of Hawaii Foodbank, **I support HB 740**, which would establish an additional minimum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit of \$250 per month per person for SNAP-eligible households whose income is below two hundred per cent of the federal poverty level

Food security is a critical issue in Hawai'i, where one in six residents lacks comprehensive access to healthy, nutritious food. SNAP is one of the most critical anti-hunger programs that makes a significant difference for families who struggle to put food on the table. SNAP provides foundational support in our high-cost islands, and SNAP benefits also support choice and access to fresh, local and healthy food.

The Hawai'i gathers donated, rescued, and purchased food and distribute it to those in need through our network of more than 200 agency partners. SNAP is an important aspect of our anti-hunger work, and we support this program that invests in food security.

Mahalo for your consideration.

With aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Miller Marvin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Miller Marvin
President and CEO, Hawaii Foodbank

HB-740

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 6:27:26 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:

Many low-income households in Hawai‘i struggle to purchase food due to the high cost of living and food prices here. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai‘i’s most disadvantaged residents.

More than 150,000 people in Hawai‘i participate in SNAP. Hawai‘i secures over hundreds of millions of dollars annually in SNAP funding, yet the need for food in Hawaii remains unmet. Households with incomes above 200% of the poverty level are ineligible for SNAP benefits, yet these household are still unable to achieve food security. A household of four earning \$64,000 per year is ineligible for SNAP benefits yet earns \$20,000 less than the amount necessary to afford its basic needs.

Additionally, the 200% poverty level cutoff creates an extreme benefits cliff whereby an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in more than \$2,900 in SNAP benefits lost per year for a single adult. For a household of four, this benefits cliff can result in \$10,000 lost in SNAP benefits per year.

This bill expands benefits for SNAP-eligible households making less than 200% of the poverty level by \$250 per month per person, while providing additional assistance to households whose incomes are too high to qualify for SNAP benefits by expanding SNAP eligibility beyond the 200% federal poverty line and creating a gradual phase-out of benefits as household income increases. Please pass HB740.

HB-740

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 9:03:50 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Whitney Herrelson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

The cost of living in Hawaii continues to rise, and working families are struggling to get by. I care for pregnant mothers and newborns, and ensuring this population receives adequate nutrition is essential. Local people should not have to go hungry in a state that brings in 3 billion dollars in tourism alone every year. Please consider passing this bill.

Whitney Herrelson, BSM, CPM, LM

HB-740

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 3:17:26 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Nanea Lo. I'm born and raised in the Hawaiian Kingdom a Kanaka Maoli.

I'm writing in STRONG SUPPORT of HB740.

Low-income families are struggling with our high cost of living and food prices. I believe that nobody in Hawaii should have to go to bed hungry at night, which is why I'm proud to have introduced HB740, which would provide an additional \$250 per month per person receiving the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit.

There is a hearing scheduled for HB740 on Thursday, February 9 at 9:00am. Please submit your testimony in support as soon as you can. If you wish to testify on Zoom, you must submit your written testimony no later than 24 hours before the hearing.

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo, Mō'ili'ili



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Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, Odom, *Advisor*
Charlie Gustafson, Tamura Super Market, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Human Services

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: Thursday, February 9, 2023
TIME: 9am
PLACE: Via Videoconference

RE: HB740 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, and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure. The simple fact is that many Hawaii families who need assistance do not currently qualify. Hawaii's high cost of living is a challenge for many families and recent inflation has worsened problems of food insecurity. 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.

It's important to note that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) does not just benefit SNAP recipients. By injecting consistent and predictable Federal and state funds into our local food systems this program helps keep the entire food system stable for all consumers.

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

HB-740

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 7:22:33 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 will provide a much needed boost to the health and well-being of low-income families in our state by increasing their access to nutritious food. The additional minimum SNAP benefit of \$250 per month per person will make a meaningful difference in the lives of families struggling to make ends meet and put food on the table.

The requirement for the state to use general funds to supplement the cost of these benefits ensures that the burden of this program does not fall solely on low-income families. This shows that our state recognizes the importance of providing support to those in need and is committed to helping families achieve food security. The graduated decline of additional SNAP benefits for households whose monthly income exceeds 200% of the federal poverty level is a responsible approach to this issue. Overall, HB740 will have a positive impact on our communities and help reduce food insecurity in Hawaii.

HB-740

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 8:53:55 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Alaimo	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Dear Chair Bellati, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 740, which would establish a minimum monthly benefit for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligible households with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The bill would also provide financial assistance to households with income above the 200 percent FPL, with a graduated decline of benefits as income increased.

SNAP is a federally funded anti-hunger program that provides monthly benefits to help qualifying residents purchase food. Individuals participating in SNAP often experience food insecurity because their household lacks consistent access to enough food to live a healthy life. SNAP is a nationally recognized public program that plays a critical role in reducing hunger, malnutrition, and poverty to more than 12% of Hawai'i's households.

The SNAP allotment per household is currently determined by the federal government through the usage of the outdated Thrifty Food Plan. Due to this, as the cost of food and living has increased, the determining factor for how much assistance an individual receives has not. This causes people of low income households to rely on high caloric, low nutrient foods to simply make it through the day.

As the most expensive state in the United States, we must exceed the efforts of many other high cost of living areas to feed their hungry. Some of which, like Washington D.C., have passed legislation to dedicate state funding to raise monthly allotments and fill in the gap between Thrifty Food Plan estimates and the true cost of adequate, nutritious meals for low-income households.

As someone who has personally been affected by the ineffectiveness of our current SNAP system, I urge all members of the committee to put yourselves in the shoes of someone who can not afford to feed themselves or their family at the end of the day. The 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in over \$2,900 in SNAP benefits lost per year for a single adult. A meal is something we often take for granted, but unfortunately this mindset exemplifies a privilege that many do not have. Food is a right, and by the passing of HB 740 we would be able to stand with our community to ensure that it is and provide a lifeline to families both under and above 200 percent FPL in this time of rising costs and stagnant wages.

Lastly, other measures will need to be carried out in order to execute this step towards a more food secure Hawai'i. In addition to additional funding, the Department of Human Services also is in need of additional support through staffing, technological advancements, and administrative assistance to properly provide aid to those in need. When Hawai'i residents encounter delays, miscommunications, or language barriers, they are further distanced from the resources they need to thrive.

Again, I urge you to take a moment to consider what it would be like to go to sleep hungry at night, or to not be able to provide for your children. This is the life of thousands of Hawai'i residents and will only be exacerbated this upcoming year. Through the passing of HB740, we have the opportunity to change this.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-740

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 10:35:51 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cynthia Texeira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HB740.