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KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE  
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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

April 9, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HCR 146 HD1 – RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO  
APPLY AND IMPLEMENT THE ELDERLY SIMPLIFIED APPLICATION PROJECT IN  
THE STATE.**

Hearing: Friday, April 11, 2025, Time 1:01 p.m.  
Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this bill and provides the following comments.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the resolution requires the Department of Human Services to adjust the minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits households to apply for and implement the Elderly Simplified Application Project.

The House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness (HD1) amended this resolution by making a technical, nonsubstantive amendment for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Department has identified that the current SNAP household count is approximately 84,000, with the number of individuals participating totaling nearly 160,000. Individuals aged sixty (60) years of age or older comprise twenty (20) percent of the overall number of SNAP participants and are part of approximately thirty-five (35) percent of all SNAP households. More research is needed to determine the number of households that are only composed of

individuals aged sixty (60) years or older and the number of households entirely composed of adults with disabilities.

However, we anticipate that the proposed change to the number of eligible senior households would increase the overall workload and overload the processing capacity to process benefit eligibility determination using our current eligibility system and the present workforce.

Presently, the DHS Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division has a workforce vacancy rate of approximately 25 percent for eligibility workers (averaging at 70 employees) and 50 percent for clerical staff (averaging at 49 employees) in our processing centers for SNAP and cash assistance applications. High vacancies and challenges to both recruitment and retention of the workforce can be attributed to retirements, a lack of interested applicants, and opportunities for higher-wage jobs, which, combined, make the vacancies very difficult to fill. The Department is engaged in constant recruitment through a Wikiwiki Hire process, which includes weekly interviews on Oahu.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) oversees SNAP and allows states the option to extend the certification period for SNAP households aged sixty years or older from twelve (12) months to twenty-four (24) months without a waiver. However, due to limitations of our present eligibility system, certification periods cannot be extended automatically beyond 12 months.

The Department will be implementing a new eligibility system in the fall of 2026 that will be able to support what is proposed in this measure by having the ability to implement and automate the extended 24-month certification period.

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



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII**  
**STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**  
**'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA**  
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING  
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

April 11, 2025

The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
The Thirty-Third Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator San Buenaventura and Committee Members:

**SUBJECT: HCR146 HD1/ HR140 HD1 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO APPLY FOR AND IMPLEMENT THE ELDERLY SIMPLIFIED APPLICATION PROJECT IN THE STATE.**

The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities respectfully submits **in support of HCR146 HD1/ HR140 HD1**, which is requesting the Department of Human Services to apply for and implement the elderly simplified application project in the state.

The Council is charged with ensuring that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to culturally competent services, supports, and other assistance and opportunities that promote independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion in the community. We recognize that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) plays a vital role in addressing food insecurity for Hawaii's most vulnerable populations, including older adults and individuals with disabilities. Many of our constituents face compounded barriers to accessing essential services due to age, disability, limited income, and the challenges of navigating complex bureaucratic systems.

Implementing ESAP would significantly reduce these barriers by:

- Streamlining the application and certification processes;
- Waiving burdensome recertification interviews;
- Allowing more flexibility in verification requirements; and
- Extending certification periods to 36 months.

HCR146 HD1/ HR140 HD1

April 11, 2025

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These improvements are especially impactful for households comprised of older adults and individuals with disabilities who have no earned income, a population that includes many people the Council represents.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HCR146 HD1/ HR140 HD1.**

Sincerely,



Daintry Bartoldus  
Executive Administrator



# HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice  
Support for HCR 146 – Requesting the Department of Human Services to Apply for and Implement the  
Elderly Simplified Application Project in the State  
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness  
Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 10:15am

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Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **HCR 146**, which requests the Department of Human Services (DHS) to apply for and implement the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP) in the state.

SNAP is a critical lifeline for more than 160,000 Hawai‘i residents, including approximately 31,000 seniors over the age of 60. Without it, many of these individuals would not have any money to pay for food at all. Kūpuna face unique challenges when it comes to food security. Many are living on fixed incomes and may have to juggle their own medical care, caring for grandchildren, and navigating public transportation within Hawai‘i’s already high cost of living.

Research has shown that older adults who are enrolled in SNAP see significant improvements in health outcomes, including:

- Less costly hospital stays and fewer hospital admissions,<sup>1</sup>
- A decrease in skipping medication doses to save money and/or delay refills,<sup>2</sup>
- Fewer nursing home admissions.<sup>3</sup>

The Elderly Simplified Application Project, or ESAP, is a collection of federal waivers that makes enrolling seniors in SNAP easier. The waiver allows: 1) extending the recertification period to from one to three years; 2) eliminating the need for an interview to re-certify SNAP benefits; and 3) only requiring verification documents from the client if the information is questionable (gathering and submitting these documents is often one of the most burdensome parts of the SNAP application process).

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel, Laura J., Sarah L. Szanton, Rachel Cahill, Jennifer L. Wolff, Pinchuan Ong, Ginger Zielinskie, Charles Betly, “Does the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Affect Hospital Utilization Among Older Adults? The Case of Maryland,” *Population Health Management*, Volume 21, Issue 2, April 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Hartline-Grafton, Heather, Olivia Dean, “The Role of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Improving Health and Well-Being,” *Food Research & Action Center*, Washington, D.C., December 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Sarah L. Szanton et al., “Food assistance is associated with decreased nursing home admissions for Maryland’s Dually Eligible Older Adults,” *BMC Geriatrics*, 17(1), 162, 2017.

There is evidence that the ESAP, in combination with other modifications, significantly improves the customer service experience and reduces the administrative burden in states that have adopted the waiver. In one particularly notable example, Alabama’s ESAP contributed to the addition of 42,000 additional SNAP-participating senior households from 2008 to 2016—a 21 percent increase.<sup>45</sup> ***A similar scale increase in Hawai‘i would reach more than 6,500 seniors and bring Hawai‘i’s senior SNAP participation rate up to nearly 60 percent.***<sup>6</sup>

As of 2024, 23 other states have already implemented ESAP and there are more to follow suit.<sup>7</sup> We hope that Hawai‘i will be next. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HCR 146. We are pleased that the Hawai‘i legislature is paying attention to improving food security.

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<sup>4</sup> Herd, Pamela, “How Administrative Burdens Are Preventing Access to Critical Income Supports for Older Adults: The Case of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,” Public Policy & Aging Report, Volume 25, Issue 2, June 20, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> National Council on Aging and Benefits Data Trust, “An Advocate’s Guide to the Elderly Simplified Application Project,” March 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Hawai‘i Appleseed, “Feeding our Kupuna: An overview of Hawai‘i senior hunger safety net and how to strengthen it,” January 2020, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, “SNAP State Options Report,” Food and Nutrition Service, 2024, p. 26.



## 2025 Network Members

Aloha Harvest  
Aloha United Way  
Chef Hui  
City and County of Honolulu  
County of Hawai'i  
Hawai'i Alliance for  
Progressive Action (HAPA)  
Hawai'i Appleseed  
Hawai'i Children's Action  
Network  
Hawai'i Dept. of Agriculture  
Hawai'i Dept. of Health  
Hawai'i Food Bank  
Hawai'i Food Bank - Kaua'i  
Branch  
Hawai'i Good Food Alliance  
Hawai'i Public Health Institute  
Kōkua Kalihi Valley  
Lanakila Pacific  
Mālama Kaua'i  
Maui Department of  
Agriculture  
Maui Food Bank  
Parents and Children Together  
Supersistence  
The Food Basket  
The Pantry, by Feeding Hawai'i  
Together  
Wai'anae Coast  
Comprehensive Health Center

[hawaiihungeraction.org](http://hawaiihungeraction.org)

## Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

April 11, 2025, at 1:01PM

### **RE: SUPPORT for HCR146, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO APPLY FOR AND IMPLEMENT THE ELDERLY SIMPLIFIED APPLICATION PROJECT IN THE STATE.**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Hunger Action Network, a coalition of more than twenty local organizations with the mission to advocate for food security for Hawai'i households, would like to express strong support for **HCR146**. This resolution would request the Department of Human Services (DHS) to participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP), along with any approvals or waivers to implement it.

SNAP is critical to the over 160,000 residents who receive benefits in Hawai'i. However, with 1 in 3 households experiencing food insecurity, it is still not reaching everyone who needs help. In particular, our kūpuna face unique challenges accessing SNAP, due to mobility or cognitive issues, lack of transportation, or social isolation. If DHS participates in ESAP, it would help considerably by providing a simplified application, extending the certification period to 36 months, and waiving recertification interviews for kūpuna and people with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> This would significantly reduce the risk of these individuals losing benefits due to procedural issues. Twenty-three states have already taken advantage of this critical waiver, and we hope that Hawai'i will be next.

Mahalo for your leadership and for your consideration of HCR146. Extending SNAP certification periods will be a tremendous relief for our kūpuna.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, "SNAP State Options Report," Food and Nutrition Service, 2024, p. 26.  
<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-16th-state-options-report-june24.pdf>



## HIPHI Board

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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 Network

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: April 10, 2025

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee On Health And Human Services

RE: Support for HCR 146 Requesting The Department Of Human Services To  
Apply For And Implement The Elderly Simplified Application Project In The  
State

Hrg: Friday, April 11, 2025, at 1:01 PM, Conference Room 225

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Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)<sup>1</sup> and the Healthy Eating, Active Living<sup>2</sup> (HEAL) coalition is in **support of HCR 146**, which requests the Department of Human Services to apply for and participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project.

One in three households in Hawai'i faces food insecurity. Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are a lifeline to many of these residents. Local families in need receive over \$600 million annually in SNAP benefits. Unfortunately, the state has made accessing these benefits incredibly difficult. The state needs to improve the enrollment process and ensure local SNAP-eligible residents can receive the federal benefits they need.

### Short Certification Periods

Residents in Hawai'i face frequent SNAP recertification requirements, with some needing to re-certify as often as every six months. Kūpuna (60 years and over) are required to recertify annually, even though federal regulations permit them to do so only once every three years.

Hawai'i has the opportunity to extend SNAP certification periods to the federal maximum for all recipients. This change would significantly reduce the paperwork burden on families and kūpuna, easing stress and administrative challenges.

Importantly, it would also reduce the risk of losing benefits during the recertification process, a common issue caused by paperwork difficulties and

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<sup>1</sup> Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

<sup>2</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.



bureaucratic barriers. By adopting this policy, Hawai'i can ensure more consistent access to essential food assistance for its residents.

#### **Decreased Workload for SNAP Staff**

Hawai'i's SNAP department faces overwhelming demand for its services, yet it lacks sufficient staffing to meet that demand effectively. By reducing the frequency of recertification, the department can significantly decrease its administrative workload.

This would free up valuable resources and allow staff to focus on improving the overall efficiency and accessibility of both the SNAP application and recertification processes. Streamlining these operations would benefit not only the department but also the thousands of residents who rely on SNAP for essential food assistance.

#### **Manual Extension is Better than No Extension**

While the current SNAP eligibility system may not be designed to automatically accommodate three-year certification periods, manually extending certifications is a far more efficient solution than requiring full reapplications. The time required for staff to manually process an extension is significantly less than the time needed to review a new application, reducing administrative burden and ensuring continued access to food assistance for those in need. We cannot afford to delay this critical change based on the uncertain timeline of a new eligibility system that may eventually support it.

Please pass HCR 146 to ensure we're doing everything we can to make SNAP as accessible as possible. Mahalo for your consideration.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nate Hix'.

Nate Hix  
Director of Policy and Advocacy



## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR 146 HD1: REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO APPLY FOR AND IMPLEMENT THE ELDERLY SIMPLIFIED APPLICATION PROJECT IN THE STATE

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawaii  
Hearing: **Friday, 4/11/25, 1:01 PM;** Videoconference and Room 225

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members, Committee on Health and Human Services:

Catholic Charities Hawaii **supports HCR 146, HD1**, which requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to implement the Elderly Simplification Application Project. This measure would help DHS simplify and streamline their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) services to the elderly and disabled residents of Hawaii.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH), a community-based organization, has provided social services in Hawaii for over 77 years, assisting 40,000 people annually. Our services target the most vulnerable in Hawaii, including elders, veterans, children, families, houseless individuals, and immigrants. This measure is one of our economic justice priorities.

We support the Department of Human Service's participation in the Elderly Simplified Application Project. This would streamline the SNAP application/recertification process and reduce barriers to accessing this valuable resource. For many elders, especially those with low English proficiency or of advanced age, more frequent recertifications have been a barrier to obtaining this very important benefit. Some of our clients have lost SNAP benefits due to lack of understanding or ability to perform the more frequent recertifications. The elderly and disabled populations mainly have stable incomes so more frequent recertifications are not needed to catch changes in income.

We also support waiving the recertification interview for eligible households. Again, this can be a barrier for these households with stable incomes. Eliminating this requirement would improve efficiency within the SNAP program, ensuring that resources reach those who need them most without undue administrative burdens.

We urge your support for this measure for greater efficiency for the SNAP program, and fewer barriers for elderly and disabled populations. Adequate food is essential for the health of these populations. Maintaining SNAP benefits is critical for them.

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



**HCR-146-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/8/2025 3:25:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this bill.