

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

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'ŌKELE

March 10, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: SB 960 SD1 - RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Hearing: March 13, 2025, Time 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

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

PURPOSE: This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rates, including establishing additional positions. Effective 7/1/2027. (SD1)

The Committee on Health and Human Services amended the measure by inserting an effective date of July 1, 2027, to allow the Department of Human Services to fill vacant existing positions in their SNAP processing centers.

DHS will discuss with the Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD) the implementation of differential pay increases as a strategy to fill vacancies and retain dedicated staff.

Presently, the Department has a workforce vacancy rate of approximately 25 percent for eligibility workers and 50 percent for clerical staff in our processing centers for SNAP and

March 10, 2025

Page 2

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 interviewing on Oahu.

The inability to sustain staffing negatively impacts overall processing and staff morale. There is a lack of staff to support the eligibility process through document processing, application registration, and other administrative functions integral to operations.

The Department would appreciate additional resources to strengthen the SNAP program, provided an appropriation does not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

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



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

KENNETH FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON AGING**
NO. 1 CAPITOL DISTRICT
250 SOUTH HOTEL STREET, SUITE 406
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2831

CAROLINE CADIRAO
DIRECTOR
Executive Office on Aging

Telephone
(808) 586-0100

Fax
(808) 586-0185

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB960 SD1
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOMELESSNESS
REP. LISA MARTEN, CHAIR
REP. IKAIKA OLDS, VICE CHAIR

Testimony of Caroline Cadirao
Director, Executive Office on Aging
Attached Agency to the Department of Health

Hearing: Thursday, March 13, 2025, at 10:00 A.M. in Conference Room 329

EOA Position: The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department of Health (DOH) supports the intent of SB960 SD1.

Fiscal Implications: Appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services (DHS) for FY2025-2026 and the same sum for FY2026-2027 to strengthen access to the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) by authorizing differential pay increases, establishing new positions for SNAP program, and taking on new initiatives to improve program participation rates.

Purpose and Justification: The purpose of this measure is to appropriate funds to DHS to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program rates, including establishing additional positions. The COVID 19 pandemic significantly increased food insecurity for many individuals, including kūpuna. With the high cost of living and increasing costs for healthcare and prescription drugs many kūpuna live on fixed incomes and struggle financially.

For individuals and families dealing with food insecurity SNAP provides a safety net and helps those with limited income buy nutritious food, enabling them to maintain a healthy diet. As discussed in the bill by eliminating the net income criteria more households will be eligible for SNAP. Additionally, by enhancing staffing for the SNAP program more households, including kupuna may access SNAP benefits, experience food security and live healthier, more fulfilling lives.

Recommendation: EOA supports the intent of SB960 SD1 and defers to the DHS for its implementation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



SB960 SD1 SNAP Improve Rates
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 13, 2025: 10:00: Room 329 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports SB960 SD1:

ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies and recovery-oriented services.

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) plays a crucial role in supporting individuals during their recovery process when dealing with mental health conditions and substance use disorders:

1. **Support During Recovery:** Individuals undergoing treatment for substance use disorders or mental health issues often need additional resources to stabilize their lives. SNAP provides essential support to ensure they can focus on recovery without worrying about food access.
2. **Improved Treatment Outcomes:** Studies show that food insecurity is linked to worse outcomes for people with mental health conditions. SNAP may help improve adherence to treatment plans, better medication efficacy, and greater engagement in therapy.
3. **Indirect Community Support:** SNAP also supports caregivers and families of individuals with behavioral health illnesses. When families can access healthy meals, it creates a more stable and supportive environment for everyone.
4. **Reduced Financial Stress:** Many people with behavioral health illnesses face financial instability due to employment challenges or medical costs. SNAP helps reduce food insecurity, alleviating one major source of stress, which can exacerbate mental health symptoms.

By improving nutrition, reducing food insecurity and providing critical support, SNAP benefits act as a foundation for better health and recovery for those managing behavioral health challenges.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for questions.



Protect Democracy Move Forward

www.indivisiblehawaii.org

info@indivisiblehawaii.org

To: House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Hearing Date/Time: March 13, 2025 10:00AM
Place: Hawaii State Capitol, Room 329
Re: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of SB960 SD1

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and the Members of Committee,

Members of Indivisible Hawai'i thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of SB960 SD1 which would appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services to increase the number of SNAP staff positions and their pay.

SNAP applicants often face long waits to reach a SNAP staff, causing many to abandon the application process. These challenges result in only 62% of the eligible population successfully enrolled in SNAP. Please pass this measure to help the struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits. No one should go hungry because they couldn't apply for the SNAP benefits.

Sincerely,
Indivisible Hawai'i Working Families Team

We're a grassroots movement of thousands of local Indivisible groups with a mission to elect progressive leaders, rebuild our democracy, and defeat the Trump agenda. In Hawai'i, we have ten groups across four islands, representing over a thousand pro-democracy citizens.



To: House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Hearing Date/Time: March 13, 2025 10:00AM
Place: Hawaii State Capitol, Room 329
Re: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of SB960 SD1

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and the Members of Committee,

Members of AAUW of Hawai'i thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of SB960 SD1 which would appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services to increase the number of SNAP staff positions and their pay.

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applicants. These challenges result in only 62% of the eligible population, including only 35% of our kupuna population, successfully enrolled in SNAP. Please pass this measure to help the struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits.

Sincerely,
Younghee Overly
AAUW of Hawai'i Public Policy Committee

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Hawai'i is an all-volunteer, statewide chapter of a national organization and is made up of six branches: Hilo, Honolulu, Kaula'i, Kona, Maui, and Windward O'ahu. AAUW's mission is to advance gender equity through research, education, and advocacy. Our goal is economic security for women in Hawai'i .



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for S.B. 960 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Thursday, March 13, 2025, at 10:00AM

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **S.B. 960**, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rates, including increasing positions and pay.

Serving more than 160,000 residents, SNAP is one of the most critical public benefit programs in the nation.¹ It is an economic lifeline for these families, yet many who are eligible still struggle to obtain or maintain benefits due to bottlenecks at the state level. In recent weeks, SNAP applicants have been facing wait times of 3 to 4 hours to complete the required eligibility interview, and in some cases are unable to get through at all. Many have reported having to submit their paperwork more than once because it was lost. As a result, only 62% of eligible residents end up enrolled in SNAP—only 35% of our kūpuna population.²

DHS is aware of the issues, and working overtime to fill vacancies, streamline procedures, and alleviate the bottlenecks. Eligibility and clerical workers are doing their best despite being overwhelmed and underpaid, but the situation may worsen before it improves. Because of the recent rule change to eliminate net income limits for eligibility, there is expected to be an extra 14,000 households eligible for SNAP benefits later this year.³ With large increases in SNAP applications upcoming, it is more urgent than ever to fund this first step towards administrative efficiency.

The SNAP office put in budget requests for performance-based incentives for eligibility workers and contracting clerical staff, but both did not make it into this year’s budget. By implementing higher pay for staff, there is more incentive to fill current vacancies and lower turnover rates, ultimately increasing internal capacity.

Thank you for considering these comments in your deliberation of S.B. 960. The high volume of applicants are all struggling Hawai‘i residents who need a system that works for them, not against them, and these administrative fixes are a step in the right direction.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, “SNAP Data Tables: National and/or State Level Monthly and/or Annual Data,” 2024. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

² American Community Survey, “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Eligibility & Access,” U.S. Census Bureau, October 18, 2024. <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/snap-eligibility-access.html>

³ D. Moore & N. Hix, “Hawai‘i’s Unnecessary Benefit Cliff: How One Small Policy Change Could Deliver Tens of Millions in Federally-Funded SNAP Benefits,” University of Hawai‘i Economic Research Organization (UHERO), <https://uhero.hawaii.edu/hawai%CA%BBis-unnecessary-benefit-cliff-how-one-small-policy-change-could-deliver-in-45m-per-year-in-federally-funded-snap-benefits/#:~:text=UHERO's%20analysis%20suggests%20that%20eliminating,course%20of%20that%20same%20year.>

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 10:20:18 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Redfeather	Ka Ohana O Na Pua	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Ka Ohana O Na Pua, support the staff expansion for the Hawai'i SNAP Program that is extremely important for Hawaii's working families and keiki nutrition. Mahalo!



March 13, 2025

RE: Support for SB 960, SD1 Relating to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, I express our support for SB 960, SD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve SNAP participation rates, including establishing additional positions.

For over 40 years, Hawai'i Foodbank has provided daily and emergency assistance to those facing food insecurity in Hawai'i. As the state's leading hunger-relief organization, Hawai'i Foodbank distributes food to families and individuals on O'ahu and in Kaua'i County through direct service programs and through our network of 266 agency partners and pantries. Last year, we served an average of over 150,000 people each month, distributing a total of 21 million pounds of nutritious food, including 5.9 million pounds of fresh produce.

Hawai'i Foodbank is also contracted as a SNAP outreach provider through the State. In this role, our team has seen firsthand the challenges SNAP applicants face. Our data shows that individuals wait 2.6 hours on average to speak with a representative and one client reported waiting over 9 hours. As a result, many give up on the process entirely due to the inability to get help and so many eligible residents, including our kūpuna, are not enrolled in this vital program.

The Department of Human Services SNAP department is critically understaffed. Increasing pay for SNAP workers and adding staff positions within the Department of Human Services would fill vacancies, improve efficiency, and boost enrollment, bringing in much-needed support to struggling families in our state. We also ask that you move up the effective date of the bill to July 1, 2025 to provide this critical support to DHS as soon as possible.

Food security is a critical issue in Hawai'i, where one in three households lack comprehensive access to healthy, nutritious food. SNAP is one of our most important anti-hunger programs, offering choice and healthy options for families who need extra support putting food on the table.

Mahalo for your consideration.

With aloha,

Amy Miller
President and CEO, Hawai'i Foodbank



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

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

March 13, 2025, at 10:00AM

RE: SUPPORT for SB 960, RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, 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 support for **SB 960**. This bill would appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rates, increasing positions and pay.

Serving over 160,000 Hawai'i residents, SNAP is a vital lifeline for struggling families. However, as many of our network members can attest, bottlenecks at the state level have made the application process extremely difficult, preventing families from receiving benefits. Struggling households have experienced wait times of 3 to 4 hours, and some have not been able to make it through the process at all.

It is essential to support DHS with adequate funding to address the current staff shortages, as they directly impact our residents ability to put food on the table for themselves and their families. By implementing higher pay for staff, there is more incentive and opportunity to streamline efficiency and alleviate the worsening barriers to this essential public program.

Mahalo for your leadership and for your consideration of **SB 960**. This will greatly impact our SNAP-eligible communities who have gone long enough without benefits.



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

Executive Officers

Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale Grocer, *Chair*
Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp., *Vice Chair*
Jayson Watts, Mahi Pono, *Secretary/Treasurer*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *Executive Director*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Derek Kurisu, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, *Advisor*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: March 13, 2025

TIME: 10am

RE: SB960 SD1 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.

HFIA supports this measure. Food insecurity has reached alarming rates in our state in recent years. Current data suggests up to 30% of families in the State face food insecurity and that in some areas that number could be as high as 40%.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a vital resource to help families in need in Hawaii. It also benefits all Hawaii consumers by bringing much needed Federal funds into our food systems and acting as a stabilizing force in the food industry at large.

Ensuring that everyone who needs food assistance has access to SNAP should be a top priority for our state Government.

Increasing staffing for the Department of Human Services SNAP program will enable more Hawaii residents who are eligible to access this vital assistance. This is beneficial not only for the individuals and families who will receive SNAP, but also for their communities and our State as a whole as food insecurity rates can be reduced and vital Federal funds will be brought into our food systems.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:17:03 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doris Matsunaga	North Hawaii Community Action Network	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

North Hawaii Community Action Network (a chapter of Indivisible Hawaii) strongly supports SB960 SD1

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:21:31 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cynthia M Archibald	North Shore Nutrition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SNAP applicants often face 4+ hours-long waits to speak with a representative, with many giving up on the process entirely due to the inability to get help. As a result, only 62% of eligible residents, including just 35% of our kūpuna, are enrolled in this vital program. The SNAP department is critically understaffed, unable to handle the high volume of applicants. Increasing pay for SNAP workers and adding staff positions within the Department of Human Services would fill vacancies, improve efficiency, and boost enrollment. Raising the enrollment rate to just 75% could bring over \$100 million in much-needed support to struggling families in our state. Please make this bill effective this year, not in 2027. Our people need help now.



P.O. Box 392, Kilauea, Kauai, HI, 96754

PHONE: (808) 212-4765 • FAX: (808) 828-2027 • E-MAIL: bbrody1@hawaii.rr.com • WEB SITE: www.getfitkauai.com

Increasing SNAP Staff and Pay Get Fit Kauai Supports SB960

Get Fit Kauai strongly supports SB960, which would provide critical funding to the Department of Human Services to increase both the number of SNAP staff positions and their pay. This bill addresses a pressing need that directly impacts the health and well-being of our community, particularly those who rely on SNAP for food security.

Currently, SNAP applicants in Hawai'i often face wait times of four hours or more to reach a representative, which leads many to abandon the application process entirely. As a result, only 62% of the eligible population successfully enrolls in the program. This problem is even more pronounced among our kūpuna, with only 35% of seniors enrolled in SNAP, despite their eligibility. These challenges contribute to food insecurity, which disproportionately affects our most vulnerable populations.

The root cause of these challenges is an understaffed and overburdened SNAP department. By increasing the number of staff positions and raising pay for these essential workers, we can fill vacancies, reduce wait times, and improve the overall effectiveness of the program.

Increasing the enrollment rate from 62% to 75% could bring over \$100 million in additional support to families in need across the state. These funds would provide families with more resources for healthy food, ultimately improving the physical and mental well-being of individuals and strengthening our community as a whole.

It is crucial that we act now. The need for support is urgent, and our people cannot wait until 2027. By making this bill effective this year, we can immediately address the gaps in our SNAP system and help thousands of Hawai'i residents, including our kūpuna, access the nutrition they need to thrive.

We urge you to support SB960 and take swift action to help our community.

Mahalo,

B Brody

Bev Brody

Get Fit Kauai – Director

H.E.A.L. (Healthy Eating Active Living)

Community Coalition of Kauai County

(808) 212-4765



March 11, 2025

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness,

Food+ Policy **strongly supports SB960**, which seeks to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) access by allocating funding to the Department of Human Services for increased staffing. This investment is critical to ensuring that eligible families receive timely benefits, supporting both food security and economic resilience in Hawaii.

At the "We Grow" Summit, hosted by the Hawai'i Youth Food Council (HYFC), youth from across the state shared their lived experiences with food insecurity. Their testimonies underscored the harsh reality that many families face—parents working multiple jobs with grueling hours, yet still struggling to put food on the table. These economic pressures not only threaten health and well-being but also fracture family bonds. **SNAP provides an essential lifeline, but staffing inefficiencies prevent families from accessing these benefits when they need them most.**

Testimonies from community members have highlighted unacceptable delays in SNAP processing, including an average of four-hour hold times, insufficient staffing, missing deposits, late mail notices, which result in delayed or lost applications. SB960 takes meaningful action by strengthening the SNAP workforce, which in turn bolsters the local economy, alleviates stress for families, and advances Hawaii's long-term food resilience.

SNAP has already made the commitment to support over 160,000 Hawai'i residents even though it lacks significant operational support. SB960 ensures both current and future recipients receive timely and effective assistance. Every dollar spent through SNAP generates \$1.50 in economic activity, benefiting local farmers, food retailers, and businesses. **Allowing applications to be lost or delayed due to staffing shortages is not just a failure of governance—it is a missed opportunity for economic growth and community stability.**

Food+ Policy urges the committee to recognize this bill as a vital investment in Hawai'i's and **strongly supports the passage of SB960.**

Mahalo,

Hawai'i Food+ Policy Team

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 2025, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food 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.

To: House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Re: **SB 960 SD1 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
March 13, 2025, 10:00 AM

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of SB 960 SD1**. This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rates, including establishing additional positions.

This bill aims to improve SNAP participation rates by establishing additional positions at DHS and implementing measures to strengthen access to this vital program. SNAP serves as a crucial safety net for low-income individuals and families across the state, assisting them in purchasing nutritious food.

In Hawai'i, SNAP plays a critical role in supporting many of our most vulnerable residents. In fact, more than half of SNAP recipients in Hawai'i are in families with children, and SNAP lifted 62,000 people above the poverty line in Hawai'i, including 26,000 children, per year between 2015 and 2019, on average.¹

The average SNAP benefit per household with children in Hawai'i was \$1,098 per month in fiscal year 2022. In 2024, Hawai'i received \$732.5 million in SNAP benefits, not only lifting up low-income families, but also directly supporting approximately 900 food retailers in Hawai'i.

There is a lot of room to enhance SNAP's reach. From 2017 to 2019, only 62% of eligible Hawai'i residents participated in SNAP,² indicating that there are tens of thousands people in Hawai'i who need the support of SNAP but are not getting it.

The additional positions and other improvements proposed by this bill would not only reduce food insecurity in our state, but also stimulate the local economy with millions more dollars going to local food retailers. In addition, the bill would improve DHS's administrative efficiency and effectiveness.

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

Sincerely,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_Hawai'i.pdf

² <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/snap-eligibility-access.html>



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 960 SD1: RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

TO: House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: **Thursday, 3/13/25, 10:00 AM;** Videoconference and Room 329

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds and Members, Committee on Human Services and Homelessness:

Catholic Charities Hawai'i **strongly supports SB 960 SD1**, which appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rates.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, community-based organization that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 77 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, veterans, houseless persons and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy to the most vulnerable people in Hawai'i. We serve over 40,000 people each year throughout the state. 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. SNAP is a godsend for those who qualify. However, the effectiveness of this program currently is hampered by understaffing at this DHS service. Furthermore, the State has removed the net income eligibility criteria which opens up the SNAP services to approximately 13,000 to 14,000 new households! This could result in \$45,000,000 in benefits to our local families.

This expansion of SNAP to workforce families who are struggling with food insecurity is greatly needed. However, applying for SNAP benefits is very frustrating under the current system. For example: *Our client, a 71 year old man, only gets \$1205 in Social Security and his rent is \$725. We helped him recertify for SNAP benefits, which was difficult due to no response from the SNAP office during his scheduled phone interview. He had to go in person to get certified and it took 3 trips to the DHS office to be seen and complete the task. He was eventually reapproved for benefits. Without SNAP, he would have trouble affording food and his rent. He has multiple serious health conditions which he has to carefully monitor and is unable to work, so he is on a low, fixed income. Having SNAP means he can afford nutritious food and maintain his housing so he does not become homeless.*

We strongly support funding to enable DHS to implement differential pay increases and other initiatives as strategies to fill vacancies and retain experienced staff and to make other needed improvements.

Take action now! Funding to strengthen the SNAP program will help local people to remain in Hawaii, and give hope for a better and healthier life for children, adults, kupuna, etc. We urge your support for this bill. If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson at (808) 527-4813.





Testimony to the House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Thursday, March 13, 2025
10:00 a. m.
State Capitol Conference Room 329 and via videoconference

Re: SB 960 SD 1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Honorable Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness:

I am Gary Simon, a member of the board of the Hawai'i Family Caregiver Coalition, whose mission is to improve the quality of life of those who give and receive care by increasing community awareness of caregiver issues through continuing advocacy, education, and training. I am offering testimony on behalf of the Hawai'i Family Caregiver Coalition.

The Hawai'i Family Caregiver Coalition strongly supports SB 960 SD 1, which appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rates, including establishing additional positions.

Inadequate SNAP staffing is a barrier to qualifying low-income families applying for SNAP in order to supplement their grocery budget so they can afford the nutritious food essential to health and well-being. An appropriation to establish additional positions will overcome this barrier.

We urge you to support SB 960 SD 1, and we urge you to recommend its passage.

Mahalo for seriously considering the bill.

Very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Simon".

Gary Simon



Email garysimon@hawaii.rr.com



To: The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Director of Public Policy
Sarielyn Curtis, External Affairs Specialist

Hearing: Thursday, March 13, 2025, 10:00 a.m., Conference Room 329

RE: **SB960 SD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of **SB960 SD1**. This measure appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program rates, including establishing additional positions.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai‘i’s community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 70,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 37 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai‘i’s only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare’s commitment to whole person care includes addressing a variety of social determinants of health, including access to care, economic stability, and nutrition among other factors. According to the Hawai‘i Foodbank, approximately 1 in 3 families in Hawai‘i are food insecure.¹ We understand that without access to affordable healthy food, the health and well-being of our members is negatively impacted. Increasing access to SNAP is critical in closing the food access gap, decreasing the financial burden on families, and improving overall health outcomes.

From keiki to kūpuna, access to nutritious meals will improve overall health and decrease adverse health outcomes. Families with access to SNAP are more likely to see their doctors for routine health checkups, preventing chronic health conditions and increasing the ability to manage disease.² For our pregnant mothers and babies,

¹ hawaiifoodbank.org/food-insecurity/

² [SNAP Is Linked With Improved Health Outcomes and Lower Health Care Costs | Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)



maternal and early childhood access to SNAP is correlated to improved birth outcomes and long-term health outcomes as adults. For elderly populations, access to healthy food may be the difference in whether they can continue living in their communities independently, decreasing the need for medical interventions and emergency department visits.³ Investing in SNAP, and making sure the program is staffed appropriately, is a long-term solution that will support our ‘ohana and most vulnerable populations’ health and quality of life.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support** of **SB960 SD1**.

³ [Hawai'i Medicaid State Plan and Demonstration](#)



HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS
Chair

John A. Burns School of Medicine,
Department of Pediatrics

Titiimaea Ta'ase, JD
Secretary

State of Hawai'i, Deputy Public Defender

Carissa Holley, MEd
Treasurer

Hale Makua Health Services

Debbie Erskine

ARCH-MEPS Consulting LLC, Owner

Camonia Graham - Tutt, PhD
University of Hawai'i - West O'ahu

Jennifer José Lo, MD
Hawai'i Health Partners

Misty Pacheco, DrPH
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

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 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: March 12, 2025

To: Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair
Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

RE: Support for SB 960 Relating To The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Hrg: Thursday, March 12, 2025, at 10:00 AM, Conference Room 329

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating, Active Living² (HEAL) coalition is in **support with amendments of SB 960 SD1**, which appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program rates, including establishing additional positions.

Please amend this bill for it to go into effect in 2025, not 2027.

One in three households in Hawai'i face food insecurity.³ 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.⁴ 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.

One Additional Worker Could Provide \$2 Million in Federal Benefits

Our SNAP office enrolls over 60,000 households annually, with less than 300 staff. That is more than 200 applications per staff member. Given the extreme backlog, adding one extra person to our SNAP department could be the difference between 200 families receiving SNAP benefits or not. At an average benefit per household of over \$9,600 annually, this worker could help provide these 200 families in need with \$2 million in total federal food assistance.

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ The State of Food Insecurity in Hawai'i - Hawai'i Food Bank.

https://hawaiiifoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/HawaiiFoodbank_TheStateOfFoodInsecurityInHawaii_2023.pdf

⁴ Hawai'i Department of Human Services.

<https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SFY-2024-SUMMARY-apr.pdf>

Difficulty Enrolling

Local Hawai'i residents face immense barriers when trying to enroll in SNAP. Wait times often exceed four hours, causing many applicants to abandon the process out of frustration.⁵ Physical office locations are frequently inaccessible, further compounding the issue. When residents call the Department of Human Services (DHS) at their scheduled time for the required interview, their calls often go unanswered, leaving them unable to complete the process. Days or weeks later, they receive a callback from an unrecognized number at an unscheduled time, making it difficult for many applicants to answer—especially if they are at work or attending to other responsibilities. As a result, their missed interview leads to a denial of their application, creating an unfair cycle that denies residents the support they need.

Currently, only 62% of eligible residents participate in the program, with participation among kūpuna even lower at just 35%.⁶ Systemic challenges, including incorrect application denials and missed interview opportunities, leave many families without the critical support they need.

SNAP Office is Understaffed Following Increased Demand

In fiscal year 2023-2024, the SNAP department processed 90,000 applications—a 50% increase from 60,000 in 2017-2018.⁷ Despite this dramatic rise in demand, staffing levels have remained stagnant at around 275 employees for several years. This lack of sufficient staffing has made the enrollment process so difficult. To adequately support residents, the state must increase staffing to match the escalating demand.

With demand already on the rise, fifty thousand additional households have become eligible for SNAP this month as the net income threshold was removed from the eligibility test.⁹ The need for more staff is urgent now—and will become even more critical as more families apply.

We must increase both the number of budgeted positions and the pay for these roles to ensure they are filled. Raising salaries will help attract and retain qualified staff, while expanding available positions across the board will allow for targeted recruitment in areas with low vacancy rates, ensuring equitable access to services statewide.

During the height of the pandemic our state sprung into action to improve the unemployment office staffing situation. With over 100,000 eligible individuals currently missing out on SNAP benefits, we must take bold, urgent action to streamline the application process and ensure that every qualified person can access the support they need.

⁵ KHON

<https://www.khon2.com/local-news/changes-in-procedure-short-staffing-causing-long-lines-at-state-benefits-offices/>

⁶ Census - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Eligibility & Access.

<https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/snap-eligibility-access.html>

⁷ Department of Human Services Budget 2025-2027.

<https://budget.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/21-Department-of-Human-Services-FB25-27-PFP.7Lt.pdf>

⁸ Department of Human Services Budget 2019-2020.

<https://budget.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/20-Department-of-Human-Services-FB19-21-PFP.ef3.pdf>

⁹ UHERO - Hawai'i's Unnecessary Benefit Cliff.

<https://uhero.hawaii.edu/hawai%ca%bbis-unnecessary-benefit-cliff-how-one-small-policy-change-could-deliver-in-45m-per-year-in-federally-funded-snap-benefits/>



10:1 Return on Investment

Our low SNAP participation rate means far fewer Hawai'i residents are accessing critical federal benefits than they should. Since half of SNAP processing staff salaries are covered by federal funds, increasing staffing levels would require the state to contribute only half the investment.¹⁰

Adding an additional \$10 million for staff on top of the roughly \$20 million we spend now would bring in an additional \$10 million in funding from the federal government for those staff. If that can help raise the SNAP participation rate from 62% to just 75%, we could bring in over \$100 million in additional federal funding annually. A \$10 million investment now would give more than a 10:1 return on investment, with more than \$100 million coming back to the state.

By failing to hire enough staff to ensure a smooth and efficient application process, we are effectively leaving federal dollars on the table and missing an opportunity to better support our community.

Variable Vacancy Rates

Many staff locations face high vacancy rates, making it challenging to fill positions. However, some sites have lower-than-average vacancies, presenting an opportunity to quickly expand the workforce. By adding positions to these locations, we could bring in dozens of new employees to strengthen the department.

Please pass this bill to ensure that federal SNAP benefits remain a reliable and accessible lifeline for all eligible residents in need.

Mahalo,

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

Nate Hix
Director of Policy and Advocacy

¹⁰ SNAP State Activity Report 2021.

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-state-activity-report-fy21.pdf>



March 13, 2025

RE: Support for SB 960, SD1, Relating to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, I express our support for SB 960, SD1 Relating to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve SNAP participation rates, including establishing additional positions.

For over 40 years, Hawai'i Foodbank has provided daily and emergency assistance to those facing food insecurity in Hawai'i. As the state's leading hunger-relief organization, Hawai'i Foodbank distributes food to families and individuals on O'ahu and in Kaua'i County through direct service programs and through our network of 266 agency partners and pantries. Last year, we served an average of over 150,000 people each month, distributing a total of 21 million pounds of nutritious food, including 5.9 million pounds of fresh produce.

Hawai'i Foodbank is also contracted as a SNAP outreach provider through the State. In this role, our team has seen firsthand the challenges SNAP applicants face. Our data shows that individuals wait 2.6 hours on average to speak with a representative and one client reported waiting over 9 hours. As a result, many give up on the process entirely due to the inability to get help and so many eligible residents, including our kūpuna, are not enrolled in this vital program.

The Department of Human Services SNAP department is critically understaffed. Increasing pay for SNAP workers and adding staff positions within the Department of Human Services would fill vacancies, improve efficiency, and boost enrollment, bringing in much-needed support to struggling families in our state.

Food security is a critical issue in Hawai'i, where one in three households lack comprehensive access to healthy, nutritious food. SNAP is one of our most important anti-hunger programs, offering choice and healthy options for families who need extra support putting food on the table.

Mahalo for your consideration,

With aloha,

Amy Miller
President and CEO, Hawai'i Foodbank

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 3:39:31 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Fox	Malana Kaua'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SNAP is essential in providing for our communities with today's cost of living, and it also helps to support our local food system. Please support this important bill. Mahalo!

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 9:31:51 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lois Langham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this much needed program. Thank you.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 9:45:30 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Coles	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The complicated SNAP application and recertification process often causes eligible recipients to lose their benefits. Please extend the certification periods and help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits. Mahalo.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 10:01:23 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kayla Marie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 10:09:30 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits. Please support this important bill. Mahalo.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 12:29:50 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tamra Hayden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I believe I could qualify for the snap benefits for Seniors, and definitely will if my Medicaid is taken away. I have not applied because every time I go to apply, the wait to speak to someone is ridiculous. SNAP applicants often face 4+ hours-long waits to speak with a representative, with many giving up on the process entirely due to the inability to get help. A

I know that as a result, only 62% of eligible residents, including just 35% of our kūpuna, are enrolled in this vital program. The SNAP department is critically understaffed, unable to handle the high volume of applicants. Increasing pay for SNAP workers and adding staff positions within the Department of Human Services would fill vacancies, improve efficiency, and boost enrollment. Raising the enrollment rate to just 75% could bring over \$100 million in much-needed support to struggling families in our state. Mahalo for your consideration

Please help solve some of the deterrents by passing this bill. Mahalo for your time.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 1:54:17 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanani Kai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT this bill.

Kanani Kai

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 2:23:29 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorna Farnum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill,

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 8:43:12 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Babcock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The complicated SNAP application and recertification process often causes eligible recipients to lose their benefits. Please extend the certification periods and help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 9:44:42 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leah Morse	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 11:54:01 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah G. Nehmad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 12:22:52 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason Ellinwood	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

At a time when the social safety net is being threatened at the federal level, the SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kūpuna receive their SNAP benefits.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 3:16:43 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Colleen Finnegan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

No one should struggle financially in order to afford to eat or to feed their family. Yet one in three families in Hawai'i are food insecure. Federal SNAP benefits abruptly end once a family's income reaches 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), although a family in Hawai'i needs to make 300% of the FPL just to make ends meet. Expanding benefits to 300% of the FPL will allow families to have a gradual decline in benefits as their income rises, allowing families to earn their way out of poverty rather than being stuck in a no-win situation where they lose thousands in benefits just by earning \$1 over the income limit. Please pass this bill to help our families in need.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:29:37 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carie Lunsford	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I think that EBT is a truly saving lives by helping feed people. We need this to continue as we are in th riches nation in the world. We need EBT and staffing filled. Let's get at this correctly.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:59:58 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

So basic; so important. Please support.

Mahalo,

Judith C. White,

Kapaa

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 5:00:15 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 6:41:20 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sheryl Summers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 8:04:08 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 9:56:53 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Taylor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB960. Thank you for the opportunity to express my support.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 10:21:24 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gaye Chan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 5:59:21 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JULIA I DAVIDSON	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 9:18:32 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Gately	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 9:18:47 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Garland	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill.

Mahalo,

Emily

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 1:09:43 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KELEN R CASEY	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. This is likely to become worse with the threat of DOGE cuts. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits."

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 1:18:48 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
gabrielle davidson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits by passing this bill, thank you!

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 4:42:04 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
G L Hutchinson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

"The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits."

"The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits."

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 7:45:19 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Ciurej	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 8:13:08 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
jonathan jay	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

please do everything in your power to protect and expand SNAP. If not for SNAP, i and thousands of others would go hungry every month. Mahalo for your efforts to protect SNAP

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:09:53 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support. Thank you.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 10:25:16 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Marten and Vice Chair Olds,

My name is Will Caron and I am a resident of Kahalu‘u on O‘ahu's windward side, where I was born and raised.

I am writing to express strong support for SB960, a pivotal piece of legislation that has the potential to improve SNAP access and strengthen our state’s food security landscape. This bill will address staffing challenges:

- SNAP applicants have been facing wait times of 3 to 4 hours to complete the required eligibility interview.
- Many have reported having to submit their paperwork more than once because it was lost.
- Higher pay for staff will fill current vacancies and lower turnover rates, ultimately increasing internal capacity.
- The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applicants.
- Increasing the number of SNAP staff positions within the Department of Human Services will help increase the number of people enrolled in SNAP.

Mahalo for your leadership and for your consideration of SB960. This bill is essential to building a thriving, food-secure Hawai‘i.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 11:03:59 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elena Vorm	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Everyone deserves the right to food security. SNAP applicants often face 4+ hours-long waits to speak with a representative, with many giving up on the process entirely due to the inability to get help. As a result, only 62% of eligible residents, including just 35% of our kūpuna, are enrolled in this vital program. The SNAP department is critically understaffed, unable to handle the high volume of applicants. Increasing pay for SNAP workers and adding staff positions within the Department of Human Services would fill vacancies, improve efficiency, and boost enrollment. Raising the enrollment rate to just 75% could bring over \$100 million in much-needed support to struggling families in our state.

Mahalo for considering basic human rights.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 12:40:36 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Nelson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP Department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applicants. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their benefits.

Thank you, Elizabeth Nelson

Kaneohe

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 1:21:58 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in favor of SB960 SD1. I believe additional staffing is vital for our ohana who are seeking assistance with SNAP benefits. However, I do have concerns about the reliance on federal reimbursements given the current political climate, and believe a backup financial plan needs to be considered. Mahalo.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 2:54:56 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Stuppelbeen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to submit my support for this legislation. A four-hour or more wait to enroll in SNAP is far too long. Please make this bill effective this year; our people need help now.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 3:05:38 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elba Reyes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The complicated SNAP application and recertification process often causes eligible recipients to lose their benefits. Please extend the certification periods and help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits".

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 3:15:53 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anne Leake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SNAP applicants often face 4+ hours-long waits to speak with a representative, with many giving up on the process entirely due to the inability to get help. As a result, only 62% of eligible residents, including just 35% of our kūpuna, are enrolled in this vital program. The SNAP department is critically understaffed, unable to handle the high volume of applicants. Increasing pay for SNAP workers and adding staff positions within the Department of Human Services would fill vacancies, improve efficiency, and boost enrollment. Raising the enrollment rate to just 75% could bring over \$100 million in much-needed support to struggling families in our state. Please make this bill effective this year, not in 2027. Our people need help now.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 4:17:09 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Renee Rabb	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for allowing me to express my support for SB960 by Senator San Buenaventura which will increase the ability of DHS to improve service to SNAP households. With the cruel measures directed towards low income people on the federal level, it's important that the state of Hawaii bridge the gap and prevent its people from going hungry

Renee Rabb

Keaau, HI 96749

Big Island

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Hearing: March 13, 2025 at 10 a.m.
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 329
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

RE: SB960, SD1 - RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Testimony IN SUPPORT

Aloha Chair Martin, Vice Chair Olds, Maui Rep Amato, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I am submitting this testimony today from Wailuku, Maui in support of SB960, SD1. I must state first that, in reviewing the prior testimony from the Department of Human Services on this matter, I find it completely shameful and unacceptable that they report an astonishing vacancy rate of 25% for SNAP Eligibility Workers and of 50% for Clerical Staff. What are they and the Department of Human Resources doing wrong that the proponents of this bill felt that the only way to address the lack of responsiveness to SNAP applicants was to turn to the Legislature for help to remedy the situation? If people cannot be hired and retained to serve the most vulnerable members of our community, the job descriptions and salaries must be improved, which is why SB960, SD1 is before you. I spent years working in workforce development and I am embarrassed for the Department of Human Services that it has to make such excuses in their testimony. The Department has to do more than throw up its hands in despair. Actively recruit for these workers rather than rely upon the Hawaii employment website. Recruiters can go to the high schools and University of Hawaii campuses near SNAP benefit offices and post job openings, go on social media, have their SNAP benefit telephone hold message and website and SNAP benefit offices share job openings. If they cannot recruit and retain employees, adjustments must be made to the job description, requirements, salaries and benefits. Please, Committee Members, exhort them to do so.

It is shocking, tragic, and unacceptable that SNAP applicants often face four hours-long waits to speak with a representative, and that many give up on the process entirely due to the inability to get help. As a result, only 62% of eligible residents, including just 35% of our kūpuna, are enrolled in this vital program. The SNAP department is critically understaffed, unable to handle the high volume of applicants. Increasing pay for SNAP workers and adding staff positions within the Department of Human Services would fill vacancies, improve efficiency, and boost enrollment. Raising the enrollment rate to just 75% could bring over \$100 million in much-needed support to struggling families in our state.

I humbly request the Committee to pass SB960, SD1 as a mechanism to address this shameful situation.

Mahalo,

Christine L. Andrews, J.D.
Wailuku, Maui

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:59:27 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kaz W	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am a student writing in regard to bill SB960 SD1 which concerns. Funds to the Department of Human Services to strengthen access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Hawai‘i.

As costs in Hawai‘i continue to rise, from everything from housing to groceries, SNAP is becoming an increasingly vital and relied on resource. Many new people that used to be able to afford groceries cannot anymore and ones that are relying on snap need additional money. Over 130,000 households rely on this aid, including our kupuna and keiki like me.

The understaffing at the DHS limits the efficiency and effectiveness of SNAP. Investing more in this program will allow it to operate at its full potential while encouraging more people to take part in this essential service. This also ensures that people get the resources that they need, promoting the health and happiness of Hawai‘i's residents. I sincerely urge you to support and pass this bill ensuring all families in Hawai‘i get the nutritional resources that they need. By investing in this program we can maximise the impact of SNAP and decrease food insecurity in our local community. Mahalo for your time.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:32:34 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patti Hatzistavrakis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I fully support **SB960 that would provide funds to the Department of Human Services to increase the number of SNAP staff positions and their pay.** In speaking with community members, it seems there are long waits to work with customer service agents due to insufficient staffing. In some cases, applicants simply abandon the process. While others, who may be in the recertification process are not able to complete the process at the risk of losing benefits. I understand this may be a difficult position to fill and maintain. However, the customer service representatives are an integral part of the SNAP process and have the ability to help many people regain food security, which is desperately needed here in Hawai'i, as one in three people are food insecure.

Thank you for your consideration of **SB960** that would provide funds to the Department of Human Services to increase the number of SNAP staff positions and their pay.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:05:07 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James E Raymond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applications. Please help struggling families and kupuna receive their SNAP benefits.

Please show your constituents that you care about families as well as the tourism and development lobbies. Please pass this measure to increase the number of affordable childcare spots.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:11:57 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beth Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support increasing the number of SNAP staff positions and their pay because SNAP applicants often face 4+ hours-long wait to talk to a representative, causing them to abandon the application process.

The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applicants. The challenge to applying for SNAP has resulted in only 62% of the eligible population successfully enrolling.

Higher pay for SNAP workers will help fill vacancies and improve program effectiveness. Increasing the number of SNAP positions will greatly increase the number of people enrolled in SNAP and therefore, greatly increase support to families in need across our state.

Mahalo for your support of increasing SNAP staff and their wages.

Beth Anderson

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 4:41:02 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Suzanne Fields	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Your support for this bill is critical.

SNAP applicants often face 4+ hours-long waits to speak with a representative, with many giving up on the process entirely due to the inability to get help. As a result, only 62% of eligible residents, including just 35% of our kūpuna, are enrolled in this vital program. The SNAP department is critically understaffed, unable to handle the high volume of applicants. Increasing pay for SNAP workers and adding staff positions within the Department of Human Services would fill vacancies, improve efficiency, and boost enrollment. Raising the enrollment rate to just 75% could bring over \$100 million in much-needed support to struggling families in our state. Please make this bill effective this year, not in 2027. Our people need help now.

And of data is what you need to SUPPORT this bill, consider these facts:

- Application challenges result in only 62% of the eligible population successfully enrolling in SNAP, including only 35% of our kūpuna population.
- The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applicants.
- Higher pay for SNAP workers will help fill vacancies and improve program effectiveness.
- Increasing the number of SNAP staff positions within the Department of Human Services will greatly help increase the number of people enrolled in SNAP.
- Raising the enrollment rate from 62% to 75% could bring over \$100 million in additional support to families in need across our state.

Please make this bill effective this year, not in 2027. Our people need help now.

Thank you,

Suzanne Fields

Haiku, Maui

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 9:05:07 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Magonigle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in strong support of SB960. I went through a very rough time last year and reluctantly applied for SNAP and qualified. I was sent a letter to call the office for an interview, which I did. I waited on the phone to speak with someone for HOURS to no avail and then I finally hung up. I tried calling multiple other times and could never get a hold of anyone. I looked on the Maui Mommies facebook page and it appeared that this was a common occurrence of no one ever picking up the phone. The recommendation from the facebook group was to go to the office in person and wait in line before the office opened. But I was too embarrassed to stand outside in line and have people see me waiting for assistance, so I never went. The icing on the cake was that I received a letter telling me that I never called in for my interview so they were cancelling my request, even though I did try to call numerous times and waited for hours to try to speak with someone. So I just gave up on SNAP. I am in a different place in my life now fortunately but when I was at a point in my life when I did need help, I was not able to reach anyone. Through my personal experience, the points listed below are very real and true.

- SNAP applicants often face 4+ hours-long waits to reach a representative, causing many to abandon the application process.
- These application challenges result in only 62% of the eligible population successfully enrolling in SNAP, including only 35% of our kūpuna population.
- The SNAP department is understaffed and unable to handle the high volume of applicants.
- Higher pay for SNAP workers will help fill vacancies and improve program effectiveness.
- Increasing the number of SNAP staff positions within the Department of Human Services will greatly help increase the number of people enrolled in SNAP.
- Raising the enrollment rate from 62% to 75% could bring over \$100 million in additional support to families in need across our state.
- Please make this bill effective this year, not in 2027. Our people need help now.



House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports: SB960 SD1

March 13th, 2025 at 10:00am; Conference Room 329

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds and members of the committee,

HAPA is testifying in support of SB960 SD1 which appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program rates, including establishing additional positions.

SNAP applicants often face 4+ hours-long waits to speak with a representative, with many giving up on the process entirely due to the inability to get help. As a result, only 62% of eligible residents, including just 35% of our kūpuna, are enrolled in this vital program. The SNAP department is critically understaffed, unable to handle the high volume of applicants. Increasing pay for SNAP workers and adding staff positions within the Department of Human Services would fill vacancies, improve efficiency, and boost enrollment. Raising the enrollment rate to just 75% could bring over \$100 million in much-needed support to struggling families in our state. Mahalo for your consideration.

Please support SB960 SD1.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick,
Executive Director

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 3:05:42 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Molly Mamaril	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds and Committee Members,

My name is Molly Mamaril and I am writing in strong support for SB960, a pivotal piece of legislation that has the potential to improve SNAP access and strengthen our state’s food security landscape. This bill will expand income eligibility for families that cannot afford the high cost of living in Hawai‘i (currently 1 in 3 families experience food insecurity). Additionally, this bill will address staffing challenges to ensure that the SNAP department at DHS can handle the high volume of applicants. Currently over 160,000 Hawai‘i residents receive benefits, though that number is growing.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Molly Mamaril

Kaimukī, O‘ahu resident

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 5:12:01 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 960.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 6:31:38 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nikos Leverenz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Marten, Vice-Chair Olds, & HSH Members:

I strongly support SB 960, SD 1, which appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rates, including additional positions.

SNAP applicants current face wait times of 3-4 hours to complete the required eligibility interview, with many reporting having to re-submit paperwork that was lost after it was mailed. Increasing staff positions will provide DHS with the ability to process applications more effectively.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

SB-960-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 8:40:10 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiare Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

****TESTIMONY IN SUPPORTING S.B. NO. 960, S.D. 1****

Aloha e nā hoa o ka Senate,

I am Tiare Smith, a Native Hawaiian whose 45 years in Kahalu‘u, O‘ahu, have bound me inextricably to the rhythms and resilience of this land. As a descendant of those who thrived through aloha ‘āina, I bear witness to the struggles of our people against the rising tide of economic hardship. It is with this legacy and a fervent belief in communal well-being that I offer my unequivocal support for Senate Bill 960 (SB960). By appropriating funds to bolster staffing for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), this measure confronts Hawaii’s precipitous cost of living with a robust, equitable solution. Far from disenfranchising our communities, it amplifies their strength, ensuring safety, efficacy, and fiscal prudence while nourishing our most vulnerable.

I. Enhancing Safety Through Nutritional Security

SB960 fortifies the safety of our social fabric by expanding access to SNAP, a lifeline for over 130,000 residents and a conduit for \$630 million annually into our economy. The elimination of the net income limit, as endorsed by Governor Green in 2024, promises an additional \$45 million to reach 13,000-14,000 more households—each receiving \$3,200 yearly. Yet, this potential remains unrealized without sufficient staffing. By funding differential pay and new positions, SB960 ensures that families in Kahalu‘u and beyond can access these benefits swiftly, safeguarding their health and stability against food insecurity—a peril antithetical to our communal ethos.

II. Elevating Efficacy with Strategic Investment

The efficacy of SNAP hinges on its implementation. Understaffing at the Department of Human Services (DHS) has long hampered participation rates, leaving federal dollars untapped. SB960’s targeted investment in personnel—authorizing pay incentives and new roles—promises to streamline processing and outreach, particularly for economically disadvantaged communities. This is no mere expenditure; it is a catalyst to unlock hundreds of millions in reimbursable federal funds, amplifying the program’s reach and reinforcing its status as the nation’s premier anti-hunger initiative. Efficacy demands execution, and SB960 delivers precisely that.

III. Cost-Effectiveness Through Federal Leverage

Critics may balk at the upfront cost to taxpayers, but SB960’s fiscal logic is unassailable. By enhancing SNAP staffing, the state leverages fully reimbursable federal benefits—each dollar spent on administration potentially yielding \$10-\$15 in economic return. The \$45 million immediate gain cited in the University of Hawaii study is but a harbinger of long-term prosperity, with participation growth poised to inject hundreds of millions more. This is not a drain on resources but a reinvestment in our people, rendering SB960 a paragon of cost-effectiveness.

IV. Equity as the Cornerstone of Support

Equity animates my endorsement. As a Native Hawaiian, I know the weight of systemic barriers—high food costs, limited access, and bureaucratic delays—that disproportionately burden rural and indigenous communities like Kahalu‘u. SB960’s focus on staffing to serve “economically disadvantaged” areas directly addresses these disparities, ensuring that SNAP reaches those historically sidelined. By nourishing families without regard to net income, it upholds our cultural mandate of mutual care, fostering an equitable future where no one is left hungry.

V. Addressing Concerns with Pragmatic Solutions

While SB960’s merits are compelling, potential drawbacks warrant consideration. I offer the following solutions to mitigate these concerns, aligning with safety, efficacy, cost-effectiveness, and equity:

1. **Mitigating Upfront Taxpayer Costs**

- **Concern**: General fund appropriations strain state budgets.
- **Solution**: Phase in staffing over two years, starting with a \$1 million pilot in 2025-2026 for high-need areas (e.g., rural O‘ahu), then scaling to \$2 million in 2026-2027. Pair this with a \$50,000 federal grant application to offset initial costs, saving \$500,000-\$1 million upfront while ensuring safety through gradual implementation.

2. **Preventing Waste or Mismanagement**

- **Concern**: Flexible spending risks inefficiency.
- **Solution**: Mandate a \$20,000 annual DHS audit of SNAP expenditures, publicly reported, and cap “other initiatives” at 10% of funds (\$200,000 max). This enhances efficacy with oversight, saving \$100,000-\$300,000 yearly by curbing waste, and ensures equitable use.

3. **Ensuring Participation Growth**

- **Concern**: Staffing alone may not boost enrollment.

- **Solution**: Allocate \$30,000 yearly for a community outreach program—partnering with Native Hawaiian organizations—to educate 5,000-7,000 households, doubling participation gains at 1/10th the cost of broad media (\$300,000). This bolsters efficacy and equity cost-effectively.

4. **Accelerating Impact**

- **Concern**: The July 1, 2027, start delays relief.

- **Solution**: Amend the effective date to July 1, 2025, using \$500,000 in existing DHS reserves for immediate hires. This ensures safety by delivering aid sooner, saving \$1 million in future emergency food programs through proactive support.

5. **Avoiding DHS Overload**

- **Concern**: Rapid staffing could overwhelm the system.

- **Solution**: Implement a \$40,000 training module for 20 new hires annually, phased over six months, and contract temporary staff (\$100,000/year) during peak rollout. This enhances efficacy, saves \$150,000-\$200,000 in turnover costs, and ensures equitable service delivery.

These solutions transform potential pitfalls into pillars of strength, maximizing SB960's impact with minimal burden.

VI. Conclusion

SB960 is a visionary step toward a Hawaii where no family goes hungry. It fortifies our safety, enhances efficacy, leverages cost-effective federal funds, and champions equity—values I hold dear as a Native Hawaiian of Kahalu'u. With the proposed refinements, its promise becomes unassailable. I urge the Senate to pass this bill, ensuring our people thrive, not merely survive. Hunger is our foe; SB960 is our weapon.

Mahalo nui loa for your wisdom and action.

Respectfully submitted,

Tiare Smith

Kahalu'u, O'ahu