

MAR 01 2024

SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ECONOMIC RESEARCH
ORGANIZATION TO CONDUCT A STUDY OF WAYS TO INCREASE ACCESS
TO SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BENEFITS.

1 WHEREAS, many low-income households struggle to purchase
2 food due to Hawaii's high cost of living and food prices; and
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4 WHEREAS, more than one in six residents experience food
5 insecurity; and
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7 WHEREAS, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
8 (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial in
9 providing food assistance to some of Hawaii's most economically
10 disadvantaged residents; and
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12 WHEREAS, households with incomes that are two hundred
13 percent above the federal poverty level are ineligible for SNAP;
14 and
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16 WHEREAS, the 2023 United For ALICE (Asset Limited, Income
17 Constrained, Employed) report highlighted that a family of four
18 with a household income of \$69,000 per year is ineligible for
19 SNAP benefits but needs an income of over \$100,000 per year to
20 meet basic needs, including food and housing; and
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22 WHEREAS, if the same family earned just \$1,000 less per
23 year, or \$68,000, the family would be eligible to receive more
24 than \$9,000 in SNAP benefits; and
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26 WHEREAS, the two hundred percent poverty level income
27 eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates a benefits cliff
28 that disincentivizes individuals from reaching their greatest
29 earning potential; and
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31 WHEREAS, many families just below SNAP's income eligibility
32 threshold decline pay increases because the financial benefit of



1 increased economic opportunities does not exceed the potential
2 cost of losing SNAP benefits; and

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4 WHEREAS, SNAP is a highly effective anti-hunger initiative
5 throughout the country; in Hawaii, SNAP supports over one
6 hundred thirty thousand individuals and brings more than
7 \$630,000,000 into the State's economy each year; and

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9 WHEREAS, many families with incomes below the two hundred
10 percent poverty level are ineligible for SNAP benefits for other
11 reasons, such as citizenship status or education level; and

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13 WHEREAS, many families who are eligible for SNAP are not
14 enrolled; and

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16 WHEREAS, addressing the problem posed by the SNAP benefits
17 cliff would help economically vulnerable households meet their
18 basic needs without limiting their earning potential; now,
19 therefore,

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21 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-second
22 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2024,
23 that the University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization is
24 requested to conduct a study of ways to increase access to
25 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits; and

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27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study is requested to
28 include:

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30 (1) Public policy options for addressing the benefits
31 cliff created by SNAP's eligibility requirements,
32 including a cost-benefit analysis of expanding
33 eligibility to households that are three hundred
34 percent above the federal poverty level;

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36 (2) An estimate of the number of Hawaii residents whose
37 income is below the three hundred percent federal
38 poverty level and who may become eligible for SNAP
39 benefits if the State expands income eligibility to
40 this level;

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1 (3) An estimate of the number of residents who are
2 currently eligible for SNAP, but not enrolled; and
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4 (4) Other issues that the University of Hawaii Economic
5 Research Organization determines to be important in
6 increasing access to SNAP benefits; and
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8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University of Hawaii
9 Economic Research Organization is requested to submit a report
10 of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed
11 legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior
12 to the convening of the Regular Session of 2025; and
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14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
15 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor,
16 Director of Human Services, and Executive Director of the
17 University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization.
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OFFERED BY: _____

