



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
March 20, 2025

The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Marten and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HR140/HCR146 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 on HR140/HCR146**, which is urging the governor to determine a course of action for the state should the federal government cut funding for Medicaid.

While ESAP primarily targets older adults with no earned income, its inclusion of adults with disabilities who have no earned income is a crucial benefit to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in Hawaii. Many individuals with I/DD live on fixed incomes such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), placing them at heightened risk for food insecurity. ESAP would streamline the SNAP application and recertification processes, reducing barriers that individuals with I/DD may face when navigating complex eligibility systems.

Additionally, the Council strongly supports developing a uniform benefits application system, allowing individuals with I/DD to fill out one comprehensive form that can populate across multiple benefit programs at the county, state, or federal level. This would significantly reduce administrative burden, improve access to essential services, and ensure that individuals with I/DD are not repeatedly forced to provide the same information across multiple agencies.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HR140/HCR146**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

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 19, 2025

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

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HCR 146/ HR 140 – RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO
APPLY AND IMPLEMENT THE ELDERLY SIMPLIFIED APPLICATION PROJECT IN
THE STATE.**

Hearing: Thursday, March 20, 2025, Time 10:15 a.m.
Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this resolution and offers comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the resolution requires the DHS to adjust the minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits households to apply for and implement the Elderly Simplified Application Project.

The Department reports that the current SNAP household count is at 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 a 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 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 Benefit, Employment & Support Services Division has a workforce vacancy rate of approximately 25 percent for eligibility workers (averaging 70 positions) and 50 percent for clerical staff (averaging 49 positions) 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 interviewing 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 the 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 resolution, as well as having the ability to implement and automate an extended 24-month certification period.

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



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 18, 2025

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

RE: Support for HR 140/HCR 146 Requesting The Department Of Human Services To Apply For And Implement The Elderly Simplified Application Project In The State

Hrg: Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 10:15 AM, Conference Room 329

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating, Active Living² (HEAL) coalition is in **support of HR 140/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

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.



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 HR 140 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, appearing to read "Nate Hix", written in a cursive style.

Nate Hix
Director of Policy and Advocacy



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 20, 2025, at 10:15AM

RE: SUPPORT for HR140 & HCR146, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO APPLY FOR AND IMPLEMENT THE ELDERLY SIMPLIFIED APPLICATION PROJECT IN THE STATE.

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 strong support for **HR140 & 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. This resolution could extend the certification period to 36 months for kūpuna and people with disabilities—an opportunity to reduce the risk of losing benefits due to recertification and paperwork issues. Following suit of 23 other states, implementing ESAP would also simplify the process by allowing kūpuna to waive recertification interviews.¹

Mahalo for your leadership and for your consideration of HR140 & HCR146. Extending SNAP certification periods will be a tremendous relief for struggling families as well as eligibility staff.

¹ 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>



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

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, 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.

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).

There is evidence that the ESAP, in combination with other modifications, significantly improves the customer service experience and reduces administrative burden 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.^{20 21} 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.

As of 2024, 23 other states have already implemented ESAP and there are more to follow suit.¹ We hope that Hawai‘i will be next. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HR 140. We are pleased that the Hawai‘i legislature is paying attention to improving food security.

¹ 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>

HR-140

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 5:27:34 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/20/2025 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Please support HCR146/HR140 -

Many kupuna live on fixed incomes, and some have other challenges—such as limited mobility or cognitive impairment—that make applying for and maintaining SNAP challenging. The Elderly Simplified Application Project allows states to extend certification periods and simplify the process for these individuals, making it easier for them to access benefits.

Mahalo

HR-140

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 9:50:01 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/20/2025 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Isis Usborne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e,

I support this resolution.

Mahalo,

Isis "Izzy" Usborne (96815)