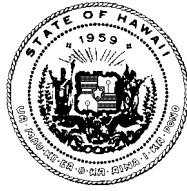


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

January 27, 2025

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

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 960 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

Hearing: Wednesday, January 29, 2025, Time 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

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

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to appropriate funds for fiscal year 2026-2027 to strengthen access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP).

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 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.



Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Anabella Bruch
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee,

Chapter Presidents

Clarence Baber
Kohala, Hawai'i

Tony Vera
East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Andrea Drayer
Ka'u, Hawai'i

Maureen Datta
Kona, Hawai'i

The Hawaii Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFUU supports SB960.**

By enhancing SNAP access and establishing additional positions, this bill not only empowers local families with improved food security but also strengthens the capacity of local agriculture to meet the nutritional needs of our communities.

Enabling SNAP benefits allows more families to afford fresh, locally grown produce, directly linking farmers with consumers. This crucial support fosters a robust local food economy, enabling farmers to invest further in sustainable farming practices and innovative agricultural solutions. Moreover, increasing SNAP accessibility through expanded staffing and resources ensures that the program's benefits reach those who most need them, reinforcing food equity across the state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahālāwai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Kilia Avelino-Purdy
Molokai

Negus Manna
Lāna'i

India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i



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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: January 28, 2025

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J. C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Hrg: Wednesday, January 29, 2025, at 1:00 PM, Conference Room 225

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

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.

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.

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>

⁵ KHON

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



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 30%.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 2024, the SNAP department processed 90,000 applications—a 50% increase from 60,000 in 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 will become eligible for SNAP this year as the net income threshold is removed from the eligibility test.⁹ The need for more staff is urgent now—and will become even more critical once this policy change takes effect.

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.

Much like the unemployment office during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is an emergency that demands an immediate, all-hands-on-deck response.

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

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 SNAP State Activity Report 2021.

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



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.

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, appearing to read "Nate Hix".

Nate Hix
Director of Policy and Advocacy



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
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
Wednesday, January 29, 2025, at 1:00PM

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, 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. 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>.



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Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: January 29, 2025

TIME: 1pm

RE: SB960 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

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 8:17:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan B Roberts Emery	Testifying for Green Party of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of Committee,

The Green Party of Hawai'i is in Strong support of SB960. Please let us fund the Staff that works hard to implement the SNAP program for our community. A yes vote on SB960 is greatly appreciated.

Mahalo nui,

Green Party of Hawaii

Susan RobertsEmery

Co Chair GPH

Paauilo



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Wednesday, January 29, 2025; 1:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225
Via Videoconference**

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 0960, RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill No. 0961, RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

This measure, as received by your Committee, would appropriate an unspecified amount of general funds for fiscal year 2025-2026, and the same amount for fiscal year 2026-2027 to strengthen access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by:

- (1) Authorizing differential pay increases;
- (2) Establishing new positions; and
- (3) Undertaking other programs or initiatives deemed effective in proving SNAP.

This bill would take effect on July 1, 2025.

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 0960

Wednesday, January 29, 2025; 1:00 p.m.

Page 2

SNAP, formally known as the "Food Stamps Program", is the largest federal food assistance program that is currently in operation. It provides food-purchasing assistance for low- and no-income people. SNAP provided assistance to approximately 40 million persons in 2018, at an expenditure of \$57.1 billion. Approximately 9.2% of American households received SNAP benefits at some point during 2017, with approximately 16.7 of all children living in households receiving SNAP benefits.

Founded during the height of the Great Depression, SNAP is the cornerstone of our national social safety net. It is intended to prevent mass starvation precipitated from unemployment and homelessness. The program was also seen as a way of helping the poor while boosting the economy and ensuring that America's farmers would obtain a fair price for their labors by allowing government to purchase and distribute excess goods in time of crisis.

The COVID-19 Pandemic demonstrated how food scarcity and poverty threatened the health and welfare of our citizens in times of dire crisis. With so many people unemployed, entire families struggled to put food on the table on a consistent basis. Lines at the food bank and food drives stretched for miles and people waited for hours to receive surplus food.

While COVID-19 no longer poses the threat it did in years past, Hawaii's citizens still struggle because of stagnant wages and the rising cost of housing, food and other essentials. The lines for surplus food are still long as citizens continue to be challenged in putting food on their tables.

The HPCA has strongly endorsed this Program in previous years and we continue to urge your support. Additional SNAP benefits for a recipient can mean the difference between having to decide whether someone's last amount of cash will go for food or rent or medications or other necessities.

For these reasons, the HPCA respectfully urges your favorable consideration of this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:28:31 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Testifying for AAUW of Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The members of AAUW of Hawaii support SB960 to staff additional positions Department of Human Services need to process SNAP. Many give up on the application process due to the long wait. Only 3 of 5 eligible residents including only 1 of 3 of our kupuna are enrolled in SNAP. Please pass this measure and address food insecurity many in Hawaii face. Mahalo for your consideration.



SB960 SNAP Improve Rates
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Wednesday, Jan 30, 2025: 1:00: Room 225 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports SB960:

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.



January 29, 2025

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

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, I express our support for SB 960 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



Hawaii Legislative Council Members

Joell Edwards
Wainiha Country Market
Hanalei

Russell Ruderman
Island Naturals
Hilo/Kona

Dr. Andrew Johnson
Niko Niko
Family Dentistry
Honolulu

Robert H. Pahia
Hawaii Taro Farm
Wailuku

Maile Meyer
Na Mea Hawaii
Honolulu

Tina Wildberger
Kihei Ice
Kihei

L. Malu Shizue Miki
Abundant Life
Natural Foods
Hilo

Tanya Aynessazian
Principal Contractor

Chamber of
Sustainable Commerce
P.O. Box 22394
Honolulu, HI 96823

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services

Wednesday, January 29, 2025
1:00 PM in Room 225

RE: **SB960** SNAP Staffing - **Support**

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

As small business owners who believe we can strengthen Hawaii's economy without hurting workers, consumers, communities or the environment, we urge this committee to vote in favor of passing SB960 which provides funds to the Department of Human Services to enhance staffing related to the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP).

SNAP access and participation rates are affected by understaffing at the department of human services. SNAP applicants and current enrollees alike often spend many hours waiting to enroll, change or update, submit documentation that was somehow not received, approved or processed in a timely manner. The SNAP department is unable to handle the high volume of applicants. Staff vacancies, pay differentials as well as procedural and technological inefficiencies need to be addressed. New positions to increase access for neighbor islands and economically disadvantaged communities are solely needed.

SNAP is the most effective anti-hunger initiative in the country. In Hawaii, 130,000 individuals are supported through this program, bringing more than \$630M into Hawaii's economy annually.

SNAP promotes economy security, health and well-being; Strengthening benefits for low-income families was the #1 legislative priority for our members this year. The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents over 450 small businesses and entrepreneurs across the state that strive for a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity.



COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Chair Senator San Buenaventura

Vice Chair Senator Aquino

BILL SB960

POSITION: SUPPORT

Hearing Date: Wednesday, 1/29/25 1pm, Room 225

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members:

Aloha United Way supports SB960, which appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program rates, including establishing additional positions.

We support SB960 because it is critical for our community to effectively expand the reach of SNAP to meet growing food insecurity. Staffing or agency limitations that prevent this must be immediately and effectively addressed and we hope this committee will help to ensure this.

AUW 211 Information and Referral line continues to see “**Food**” as the 2nd highest requested need from callers, after affordable housing. AUW 211 line is a key entity conducting SNAP prescreening for Hawaii. We track data on needs and connect residents to help with food, including SNAP. Yet for every caller we complete SNAP intake for, 3 others make too much money to currently be eligible—leaving a huge documented unmet need. Addressing the capacity for DHS to help address this is vital.

ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. ALICE is our households who are employed but whose incomes are not sufficient to meet basic costs. **ALICE families are 40% of our State’s residents. The new 2024 State of ALICE in Hawaii report found that 46% of ALICE families have experienced not having enough food and not having enough money to buy more. d 1 in 5 families above the federal poverty line did not have enough food and couldn’t buy more.**

It has never been more important to take strong and clear action to strengthen and expand SNAP to address food insecurity and support local families as we face the current national situation and potential cuts. We urge your action on SB960 to help address the gaps in SNAP benefits in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your support for SB960.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Bartell".

Michelle Bartell
President & CEO
Aloha United Way

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Suzanne Skjold".

Suzanne Skjold
Chief Operating Officer
Aloha United Way



To: The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Hearing: Wednesday, January 29, 2025, 1:00 p.m., Conference Room 329

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

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of **SB960**. 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 housing, economic stability, and nutrition among other factors. We understand that without access to affordable healthy food, the health and well-being of our members is negatively impacted. For example, researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that food insecurity is associated with obesity among US adults in Hawai'i and 11 other states.¹

From keiki to kupuna, increasing 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

¹ [J Acad Nutr Diet. 2012 Sep; 112\(9\): 1403–1409.](#)

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



ALOHA CARE

mothers and babies, 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 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**.

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



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

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

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: **Wednesday, 1/29/25; 1:00 PM; Videoconference and Room 225**

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

Catholic Charities Hawai'i **Supports SB 960**, which appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rates, including establishing additional positions.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy to the most vulnerable of the people in Hawai'i. We serve over 113,000 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, Governor Green has announced that the State will remove the net income criteria which would open 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 across the state.

This expansion of SNAP to many workforce families who are struggling with the lack of food is greatly needed. However, **applying for SNAP benefits will be very frustrating to families, under the current system.** Enhancing staffing and other initiatives to strengthen this program is critical. Therefore, we strongly support this proposed appropriation to DHS for this program.

Take action now! Help our workforce and their children with food benefits. Help kupuna and others struggling with food insecurity. Food is a huge cost to local families. This initiative 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 SB 960. If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson at (808) 527-4813.



Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

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

January 29th, 2025 at 1:00pm; Conference Room 225

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee,

HAPA is testifying in support of SB960 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.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', with a stylized, cursive script.

Anne Frederick,
Executive Director

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 1:51:35 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ian Kennedy	Testifying for Strata Farms LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a farmer in Waimānalo, I am deeply invested in our community's food security and well-being, and I strongly support SB960. This bill, which provides funding to the Department of Human Services to increase SNAP staff and improve their pay, is essential for addressing critical barriers that prevent many of our neighbors from accessing the support they need.

In Waimānalo, we see firsthand the struggles that many kūpuna and families face in putting food on the table. SNAP is a lifeline for many in our community, but the current system is overwhelmed. I've heard stories of kūpuna who wait hours to speak with a representative or give up altogether because they can't navigate the complicated process. These are the same kūpuna who could be purchasing fresh, locally grown foods like kalo and mamaki, directly supporting farmers like me while improving their own health and nutrition.

The challenges in the SNAP program—such as long wait times and understaffed offices—are particularly troubling in rural areas like ours. Families in Waimānalo often depend on programs like SNAP to afford fresh produce, yet only 35% of kūpuna statewide are enrolled. This gap not only affects the health of our kūpuna but also reduces opportunities for farmers in our area to connect with local consumers who could benefit from the food we grow.

By increasing pay for SNAP workers and hiring additional staff, SB960 will directly address these issues. A more efficient SNAP system means more eligible families and kūpuna in Waimānalo can receive benefits, and with more people able to afford fresh, nutritious, local foods, our farms and local economy will benefit as well.

Raising SNAP enrollment rates to even 75% could bring over \$100 million in federal support to families in Hawai'i. Imagine the impact that could have here in Waimānalo—providing kūpuna with kalo or sweet potatoes from local farms or helping families afford fresh lettuce and other produce we grow at Strata Farms. SNAP is not just about providing food; it's about strengthening connections between our community and local farmers, creating a more resilient and self-sufficient food system for Hawai'i.

I urge the Legislature to pass SB960. This bill will not only improve the efficiency and accessibility of the SNAP program but also help build a stronger, healthier, and more connected Waimānalo.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Ian
Farmer/Owner, Strata Farms, Waimānalo

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 2:02:22 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Health and Human Services Committee,

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 households realize food security, which is desperately needed here in Hawaii, 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

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 11:20:26 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glenn Choy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 10:39:17 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jean Butel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawaii Department of Human Services plays a critical role in ensuring food security for vulnerable families through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). However, the increasing demand for assistance has overwhelmed current staff, leading to delays in application processing and leaving families in dire situations without timely support. By increasing funding to hire additional staff, the department can process applications more efficiently, reduce wait times, and better serve Hawaii's communities in need. Investing in this capacity not only supports individuals and families facing economic hardships but also strengthens the state's commitment to addressing hunger and poverty. With adequate resources, the Department of Human Services can ensure that no one in Hawaii has to endure unnecessary delays in accessing essential food assistance.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 5:20:22 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Faccenda	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 support SB960.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 5:39:28 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tasman Kekai Mattox	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 support SB960.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 1:37:16 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul Kimo Pestana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Only 62% of eligible people, including just 35% of our eligible elders, are enrolled in this 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.

Please support measure 960.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 5:47:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emelia Briscoe	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 support SB960.

Mahalo,

Emelia Briscoe, Honolulu

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 5:06:09 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lela Kalama	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 support SB960.

mahalo,

Lela Kalama, Kea'au, HI

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 6:17:45 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	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 support SB960. Mahalo.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 7:22:57 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Irena Bliss	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

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 Hawai'i.

Please support SB960.

It is vital to continue to live the values of Aloha, and support the well-being and thriving of kūpuna and all future generations on island.

Mahalo piha for your consideration.

Irena Bliss

Ha'ikū, Maui 96708

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 7:26:12 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl hendrickson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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 support SB960.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 8:51:12 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tamara Luthy	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 support SB960.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 9:34:03 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debra M Javar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully SUPPORT SB960. This is an essential service that needs more staffing and pay.

Mahalo

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 9:53:40 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	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 support SB960.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 10:23:37 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
De Austin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, members of Senate Committee on Health & Human Services,

Please support support SB960 which provides funding for staff in the SNAP department.

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 support SB960.

Mahalo,

D. Austin

Kihei, HI

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 10:06:46 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Nihipali	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 support SB960.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Michele Nihipali

54-074 A Kam Hwy.

Hauula, HI 96717

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 10:28:18 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge you to support SB960, which will increase pay for SNAP workers and add staff positions within the Department of Human Services, thereby improving efficiency and boosting enrollment. 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. Raising the enrollment rate to just 75% could bring over \$100 million in much-needed support to struggling families in our state.

Thank you

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 3:51:37 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

Please support this vital bill to help our residents access food. No one should be going hungry because of understaffing.

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 support SB960.

Mahalo,

Isis “Izzy” Usborne (they/them)

Kapahulu Ave resident (96815)

2026 JD Candidate at William S. Richardson School of Law

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 6:02:35 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SB960 STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha Senators! I'm writing to ask you to support SB960.

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 support SB960.

Mahalo for your consideration!

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 8:49:56 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sven Sorge	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 support SB960.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 9:45:01 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keila Paahana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 7:10:54 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni DeFranco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB960, which provides funds to increase the number of SNAP staff and their pay. Currently, SNAP applicants face excessive wait times—often over 4 hours—leading many to abandon the process. This has resulted in only 62% of eligible residents, including just 35% of our kūpuna, being enrolled in this essential program.

The SNAP department is severely understaffed, making it difficult to meet the needs of our community. By increasing pay and adding staff, we can fill vacancies, improve efficiency, and boost enrollment. Raising the enrollment rate to 75% could bring over \$100 million in critical support to families in need.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:45:11 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stacey Alapai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha please support this bill. The Maui office has a line out the door before they even open. People are given phone appointment times, but wait all day for nothing. If you can't fully staff the dept then you need to stop requiring so much paperwork to lighten the load.

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.

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:51:15 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joy Puckett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I'm in support of SB960. This Bill needs passing. The waiting period in person and phone lines is the most stressful thing we are going through. They need help right now. Please support this Bill and end the nightmare. Mahalo

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 11:04:50 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Honda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support. Thank you Chair! Aloha~

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 11:36:42 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

I support bill SB960! 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.

I can speak on this from personal experience where my sister, who had just had her first baby, sat in the waiting room with a newborn for hours, just to get told she did not bring all the paperwork she need to be approved for benefits.

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.

Na,

Leo Nahe Smith, Pearl City

SB960 - Provides funds to the Department of Human Services to increase the number of SNAP staff positions and their pay.

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 960, which seeks to provide funding to the Department of Human Services to increase both the number of SNAP staff positions and their pay.

Currently, applicants experience wait times of four hours or more, causing many to abandon the application process. This has resulted in only 62% of the eligible population enrolling in SNAP, with just 35% of our kūpuna accessing these benefits. The SNAP department is severely understaffed and struggles to manage the high volume of applicants.

By increasing staff positions and offering competitive pay, we can improve program effectiveness and accessibility. Raising the enrollment rate from 62% to 75% could bring over \$100 million in additional support to families statewide, significantly alleviating food insecurity.

I urge lawmakers to prioritize SB 960 to help dismantle barriers to access and strengthen support for those in need. Thank you for considering this vital legislation.

Respectfully,
Leigh Ann Lopez

SB-960

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 12:37:50 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordan Smith	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. Mahalo for your consideration.