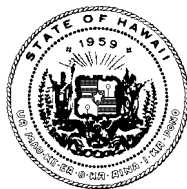


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



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 LAWE LAWE KANAKA  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

January 28, 2025

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

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 963 – 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, provides comments, requests clarification, and suggests amendments.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, requires the Department of Human Services to: (1) prorate or exclude certain income from household members who are ineligible for the Program; (2) establish a standardized medical expense deduction option for elderly or disabled household members; (3) establish a pre-release Program application form for individuals who are incarcerated and scheduled for release; and (4) report to the Legislature. Specifies that, for purposes of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the federal restriction of providing Program benefits to certain individuals does not apply in Hawaii.

The Department currently addresses the proration or exclusion of certain income for ineligible household members for SNAP as proposed in this measure through Hawaii Administrative Rules, Title 17, Section 663-82.2.

To establish a standardized medical deduction, the amount of the standardized medical deduction would need to be determined, and DHS would need to submit and receive federal

approval to implement it. Notably, the amount of the standard medical deduction must be cost-neutral, meaning that the standard medical deduction must not result in an overall increase in the dollar amount that the federal agency allocates to the state for SNAP benefit payments.

If the amount of the standard medical deduction results in an increase in overall SNAP benefit payment allocation we would need to offset by adjusting the federal SNAP benefit allocation in another area, such as lowering the amount of deductions provided for the utilities. The net result would be fewer SNAP benefits for those recipients who claim utility expenses in order to provide more SNAP benefits for those who claim the standardized medical deduction.

It is critical that a standardized medical deduction is calibrated at the right amount. An offset that lowers the dollar amount of utility deductions will adversely affect a larger population of SNAP recipients than the population that would be eligible for the medical deduction, which is only allowed for households that have an elderly (60+) or disabled individual in the household. Utility deductions are allowed for any SNAP household, so needing to lower utility deductions would affect a greater number of households. DHS needs to do more research prior to establishing and implementing a standardized medical deduction.

Regarding establishing a pre-release program application form for individuals who are incarcerated and scheduled for release, DHS is concerned that it is currently not able to implement this proposal due to the limitations of the current automated eligibility system. We also lack staff resources to implement and sustain this process.

If DHS were to implement this with the current eligibility system limitations, it would require the Department to manually track and process each individual application meeting the pre-release from incarceration criteria upon the development of an application process. Manually tracking and processing these applications and cases, rather than automating these processes would potentially increase payment issuance errors. The State cannot afford additional payment issuance errors as the SNAP program is currently under corrective action for its high payment error rate during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the State being assessed as a liability payment owed to the federal agency. The error rates have since decreased; however, DHS has requested an emergency appropriation in HB1099 and SB1418 that describes what is necessary to address the current penalty.

The Department will implement a new eligibility system in the fall of 2026 that will be better positioned to support this measure's proposals. Consequently, if the measure moves forward, DHS requests an extended effective date that considers the timeline for our new eligibility system.

In addition to the eligibility system's current limits to implement a pre-release program, we anticipate an increase in the overall workload and application processing capacity of our eligibility workers to process benefit eligibility determinations. An appropriation to address this additional resource would be required. DHS will update the resources needed to implement this measure as the session progresses.

Finally, regarding the proposed amendment to section 346.-53.3, HRS, DHS requests clarification regarding treatment compliance for TANF and SNAP recipients. As drafted, the proposed amendment (a) would require families with felony convictions receiving Temporary Assistance for Needing Families (TANF) assistance to comply with treatment, though (b) SNAP recipients with felony convictions would not have to comply with treatment or could refuse treatment and receive SNAP.

If the Legislature intends to remove the compliance with treatment language so that neither TANF nor SNAP recipients need to comply with treatment, DHS suggests the following amendments:

" [†] §346-53.3 [†] **Temporary assistance for needy families and ~~[food stamps]~~ supplemental nutrition assistance program for individuals with a felony conviction [which] that has as an element the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance.** Section 115(a) of Public Law 104-193 shall not apply in Hawaii. ~~[to persons who are complying with treatment or who have not refused or failed to comply with treatment.]~~ "

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



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

#### **Executive Officers**

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**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 Health and Human Services

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: January 29, 2025

TIME: 1pm

RE: SB963 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.

A study co-authored by the university of Hawaii economic research organization and Hawaii Public Health Institute found that eliminating the net income limit criteria for SNAP beneficiaries would provide an additional \$45,000,000 in benefits to struggling families across the State and expand eligibility for thirteen thousand to fourteen thousand more

households, with each household receiving an average of \$3,200 annually in food assistance.

The State has the power to make the changes in this measure to more accurately reflect the usable income of households and ensure that more of those in our state who need food assistance have access to this program.

We encourage the Committee to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



# HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice  
Support for S.B. 963 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services  
Wednesday, January 29, 2025, at 1:00PM

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **S.B. 963**, which would exclude income from those individuals in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households who are ineligible for benefits, establish a standard medical deduction, establish a pre-release program and remove the drug felony ban.

Serving more than 160,000 residents, SNAP is an economic lifeline and a significant economic stimulus for our state. Benefits are funded by the federal government and administered by states, who are able to take advantage of certain flexibilities in how the program is administered.

The changes proposed in S.B. 963 will help the program reach more Hawai'i residents by:

1. **Not counting income from ineligible household members** (due to immigration status or other non-income related disqualifying criteria). This more fairly allows SNAP households to receive the benefits they need.
2. **Allowing incarcerated individuals to apply before being released.** A pre-release program providing immediate SNAP access will address food insecurity—a key driver of recidivism affecting over 70% of formerly incarcerated individuals—and support successful reintegration.
3. **Removing an additional barrier placed on individuals with prior drug felony convictions.** This would make it easier for individuals reintegrated into society to access benefits.

The bill would also allow kūpuna households to receive more in benefits without requiring them to document all of their medical expenses. These simple changes will increase the eligibility and benefit amounts for many in our community. Thank you for considering this bill.

**SB-963**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:40:37 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 SB963 which would establish a medical expense deduction for elderly or disabled, and allow those who are incarcerated + scheduled for release to apply for SNAP benefits. All residents in Hawaii deserve to live without hunger. Please pass this measure and mahalo for your consideration.



**Senate Committee on Health & Human Services**

**Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports: SB963**

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 SB963 which requires the Department of Human Services to: (1) prorate or exclude certain income from household members who are ineligible for the Program; (2) establish a standardized medical expense deduction option for elderly or disabled household members; (3) establish a pre-release Program application form for individuals who are incarcerated and scheduled for release; and (4) report to the Legislature. Specifies that, for purposes of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the federal restriction of providing Program benefits to certain individuals does not apply in Hawai'i.

This bill ensures fair access to SNAP benefits for eligible families, simplifies the application process for elderly and disabled residents, and supports individuals transitioning out of incarceration by providing immediate food assistance. Enhancing benefits and accessibility empowers individuals in our community, providing them with the support they need to thrive and succeed.

Please support SB963.

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





**SB963 SNAP Adjust Eligibility Criteria**  
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 SB963:**

*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 963, 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 963 Relating to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This bill requires the Department of Human Services to: (1) prorate or exclude certain income from household members who are ineligible for the Program; (2) establish a standardized medical expense deduction option for elderly or disabled household members; (3) establish a pre-release Program application form for individuals who are incarcerated and scheduled for release; and (4) report to the Legislature. The bill also specifies that, for purposes of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the federal restriction of providing Program benefits to certain individuals does not apply in Hawai'i.

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. This bill ensures fair access to SNAP benefits for eligible families, simplifies the application process for elderly and disabled residents, and supports individuals transitioning out of incarceration by providing immediate food assistance. Enhancing benefits and accessibility empowers individuals in our community, providing them with the support they need to thrive and succeed.

Food security is a critical issue in Hawai'i, where one in three households lack comprehensive access to healthy, nutritious food. The Department of Human Services SNAP department is critically understaffed and we support measures that will help address the shortage. 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



#### Officers

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Maureen Datta  
Secretary

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

#### Chapter Presidents

Clarence Baber  
Kohala, Hawaii

Tony Vera  
East Hawaii

Puna, Hawaii

Andrea Drayer  
Ka'u, Hawaii

Maureen Datta  
Kona, Hawaii

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 SB963.**

SB963 represents a significant and necessary advancement in supporting Hawaii's diverse community, especially those who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). By proposing critical adjustments, such as the proration and exclusion of certain incomes and establishing a standardized medical expense deduction for the elderly and disabled, the bill addresses the unique financial challenges faced by many households. These changes will allow more individuals to qualify for SNAP and potentially increase benefits for existing recipients, ensuring access to adequate nutrition for those who need it most.

Fawn Helekahi-Burns  
Hana, Maui

Mason Scharer  
Haleakala, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros  
Mauna Kahalawai,  
Maui

Kaipo Kekona  
Lahaina, Maui

The Hawaii Farmers Union strongly supports these initiatives as they not only provide essential aid to vulnerable populations but also significantly benefit local agriculture. Through the DaBux program, SNAP recipients can purchase fresh, locally sourced produce at discounted rates, establishing a direct channel between local farmers and consumers. This strengthens our local food systems and enhances economic stability for Hawaii's farms and families.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF

Kilia Avelino-Purdy  
Molokai

Negus Manna  
Lana'i

India Clark  
North Shore, Oahu

Christian Zuckerman  
Wai'anae, Oahu

Ted Radovich  
Waimanalo, Oahu

Vincent Kimura  
Honolulu, Oahu

Natalie Urminska  
Kauai



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: **SB963 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

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AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of **SB963**. This measure requires the Department of Human Services to: (1) prorate or exclude certain income from household members who are ineligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; (2) establish a standardized medical expense deduction option for elderly or disabled household members; (3) establish a pre-release Program application form for individuals who are incarcerated and scheduled for release; and (4) report to the Legislature. Specifies that, for purposes of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the federal restriction of providing Program benefits to certain individuals does not apply in Hawai'i.

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.<sup>1</sup>

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



ALOHA CARE

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.<sup>2</sup> For our pregnant 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 **SB963**.

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

<sup>3</sup> [Hawai'i Medicaid State Plan and Demonstration](#)



COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Chair Senator San Buenaventura

Vice Chair Senator Aquino

BILL SB963

POSITION: SUPPORT

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

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

**Aloha United Way and the ALICE Initiative strongly support SB963**, which requires the Department of Human Services to: (1) prorate or exclude certain income from household members who are ineligible for the Program; (2) establish a standardized medical expense deduction option for elderly or disabled household members; (3) establish a pre-release Program application form for individuals who are incarcerated and scheduled for release. **These provisions will collectively expand eligibility for SNAP to several high need groups, and meet the critical and growing need to address food insecurity in our community.**

AUW 211 Information and Referral line continues to see “**Food**” as the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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!

The new **2024 State of ALICE in Hawaii report** shows how far-reaching food insecurity is in Hawaii. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, and are our households who are employed but whose incomes are not sufficient to meet basic costs. **ALICE families are 40% of our State’s residents**, and the ALICE report found that 46% of ALICE families have experienced not having enough food and not having enough money to buy more in the past and 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 address food insecurity and support local families as we face the current national situation and potential cuts. We urge your action on SB963 to expand those eligible for SNAP benefits in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your support for SB963.

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



**LATE**

CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 963: RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawaii

**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 Hawaii **Supports SB 963**, which requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to 1) prorate or exclude certain income from household members who are ineligible for the Program; 2) establish a standard medical expense deduction option for elderly/disabled household members; 3) establish a pre-release application form for persons incarcerated and scheduled for release, and 4) report to the Legislature. It specifies that federal restrictions on benefits do not apply in Hawaii to persons who are complying with treatment or have not refused/failed to comply with treatment.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii 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 Hawaii. We serve over 113,000 people each year throughout the state. This bill is one of our economic justice priorities

We support the proposed changes to SNAP benefits since these would open up the program to more individuals, simplify some processes and address unmet needs in the community. Prorating or excluding income from household members who are not eligible for benefits will ensure SNAP calculations do not unduly penalize eligible household members. Creating a standard medical expense deduction is a great idea to simplify this process for many households. Households with large medical expenses could still opt to document and claim the actual expenses.

Partnering with correction facilities will enable individuals who are due for release to apply and receive benefits shortly after their release. The SNAP counseling provided will help incarcerated persons transition back into the community. This is a need long identified by homeless providers who often accept these persons into their shelters. Allowing those in treatment for a controlled substance to receive benefits will assist in their recovery and regaining health.

We urge your support for this bill. If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson at (808) 527-4813.



Catholic  
Charities  
USA



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822  
Phone (808) 527-4813 •





## **Committee On Health And Human Services**

DATE: Wednesday, January 29, 2025

TIME: 1:00 PM

PLACE: Conference Room 225

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

I am a volunteer for a prison reentry program and I am here to testify in **strong support** of SB963. The food provided inside correctional facilities is often described as bland, inedible, and lacking nutritional value. Many incarcerated individuals rely on commissaries to supplement their diets, but these options are often unhealthy and overpriced—where a pack of dry saimin can cost \$5. This lack of access to nutritious food has negative long-term impacts on the health and well-being of incarcerated individuals, particularly as they prepare to reenter the community.

Studies estimate that 70-91% of people leaving correctional facilities are food insecure, meaning they don't know where their next meal will come from after release. Despite this, federal regulations require individuals to wait until they are released to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, causing delays that leave many unable to meet basic food needs during a critical time of transition.

SB963 addresses this urgent issue by allowing incarcerated individuals to apply for SNAP benefits before release, ensuring access to nutritious food immediately upon reentry. Hawai'i has the opportunity to join 13 other states that have implemented pre-release waivers, proven to reduce recidivism and support successful reentry.

By passing SB963, the legislature can support DHS in implementing these waivers and address systemic barriers to food security. Additionally, this effort aligns with Hawai'i's recent approval of the pre-release coverage provision in the 1115 Medicaid waiver, making the state a leader in comprehensive reentry support. With food insecurity often contributing to the alarming 43% rearrest rate within a year of release, this bill represents a vital step toward breaking the cycle of recidivism and fostering healthier communities.

**Please pass SB963 and ensure justice-involved individuals have access to the resources they need to successfully rebuild their lives.** Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jordan Smith



**SB-963**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 2:12:15 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 **SB963 to increase SNAP benefits or access for many different groups**. SNAP benefits should be equally accessible to all eligible families and individuals. Enhancing benefits and accessibility empowers individuals in our community, providing them with the support they need to thrive and succeed.

Thank you for your consideration of SB963 to increase SNAP benefits or access for many different groups.

**SB-963**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 10:42:15 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 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a vital lifeline for individuals and families in need, and these proposed reforms will ensure it is more equitable and accessible for Hawai‘i’s most vulnerable residents. By prorating or excluding certain income from ineligible household members, establishing a standardized medical expense deduction for elderly or disabled individuals, and creating a pre-release application process for incarcerated individuals nearing release, the program will better address the unique challenges faced by diverse populations in the state. Additionally, requiring reports to the Legislature promotes transparency and accountability, while clarifying that federal restrictions on benefits do not apply in Hawai‘i reflects the state’s commitment to supporting all its residents. These changes will strengthen SNAP as an essential tool in reducing hunger and poverty, empowering individuals to achieve greater stability and self-sufficiency.

**SB-963**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 11:40:07 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:

**I support bill SB 963!** This bill ensures fair access to SNAP benefits for eligible families, simplifies the application process for elderly and disabled residents, and supports individuals transitioning out of incarceration by providing immediate food assistance. Enhancing benefits and accessibility empowers individuals in our community, providing them with the support they need to thrive and succeed.

Na,

Leo Nahe Smith, Pearl City

**SB-963**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:46:10 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 strongly support SB963. They say I don't qualify for snap because I make to much money. How is this possible? I work 36 hours a week. My husband works as a dasher part time. I pay rent, utilities, a car payment, car insurance and car maintenance so we can get to work. I go to food drives because food prices is unaffordable for me and I can't get medical insurance for us because it will cost me \$700.+ per pay check taken out that will drive me to be homeless. Do we have to give up everything to qualify for snap or medical insurance? So I'm hoping this Bill SB963 is passed to help a lot of us hard working Kanaka's get by. Mahalo

**SB-963**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:48:46 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:

This bill ensures fair access to SNAP benefits for eligible families, simplifies the application process for elderly and disabled residents, and supports individuals transitioning out of incarceration by providing immediate food assistance. Enhancing benefits and accessibility empowers individuals in our community, providing them with the support they need to thrive and succeed.

it's simple - expand food access for more people. Our cost of groceries is the highest in the nation and we should be feeding EVERYONE who needs it.

LATE

**SB-963**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 3:21:33 PM  
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

**LATE**

Testimony Commenting on Senate Bill 963

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, & members of the Committee,

My name is Dylan Moore, and I am an Assistant Professor at UHERO, specializing in tax and transfer policy. I am testifying on my own behalf, but have no personal position on this bill. Rather, I will offer an analysis of Senate Bill 963 informed by my expertise and the latest academic research.

When considering the bill's proposals to modify income/benefit calculations, and to allow for a standard medical deduction, it is important to keep in mind that any policy change which increases SNAP benefit amounts—subject to federal rules about SNAP—will benefit to state residents at no cost to the state, since these additional SNAP benefits are federally-funded.

While I will reiterate that I have no personal position on the bill, from the perspective of state policymakers it is difficult to envision an argument against it. Benefit programs like SNAP likely do disincentivize labor force participation and increasing earnings to some extent. However, the magnitude of such effects would have to be implausibly great in order for the opportunity to obtain additional federal funds for state residents not pay off.

Regarding the bill's proposal to establish a pre-release application program, it is important to note that if this program increases SNAP takeup by incarcerated individuals who are released, [evidence strongly suggests that this will reduce recidivism](#). The costs of crime and incarceration for the state are so high that the investments in the program are quite likely to pay enormous dividends on multiple fronts.

Sincerely,

Dylan Moore, Assistant Professor of Economics

University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization (UHERO)