

**SB 1668**

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Jay Furfaro, Vice Chair  
Tim Bynum  
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Telephone (808) 241-6371  
Fax (808) 241-6349  
Email [cokcouncil@kauai.gov](mailto:cokcouncil@kauai.gov)

**Council Services Division**  
4396 Rice Street, Room 206  
Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii 96766-1371

February 5, 2009

**TESTIMONY OF TIM BYNUM AND JAY FURFARO  
KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ON**

**S. B. NO. 1668, HAWAII SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)**

**Senate Committee on Human Services**

**February 10, 2009**

**2:15 p.m.**

**Conference Room 016**

Dear Chair Chun Oakland and Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. No. 1668 relating to Human Services – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as individual members of the Kauai County Council.

Currently, Hawaii loses millions of dollars each year in unclaimed federal funding due to a low participation rate in SNAP (72% of eligible households) under Title 7, United States Code, sections 2011 to 2027. The passage of this bill would be beneficial because it would increase the program's participation rate and bring more federal dollars to the State.

The bill proposes to reduce the State's stringent eligibility standards which are currently more restrictive than the Federal standards. Further, the bill deletes the requirement of the asset test which considers a household's savings and other non-liquid capital in determining a participant's eligibility, therefore, denying access to needy individuals to SNAP in the past. The bill also minimizes the lengthy application process which has been a deterrent for eligible households to apply for the program. Lastly, should the program's participation rate increase to 90%, the bill could generate additional federal dollars (estimated at \$45,000,000) to be spent by Hawaii consumers to boost Hawaii's economy.

For the reasons stated above, we wholeheartedly support S.B. No. 1668 and humbly request your favorable consideration of this measure.

Sincerely,

**TIM BYNUM**  
Councilmember

**JAY FURFARO**  
Council Vice Chair

YS/wa2009-463a

Aloha United Way

200 N. Vineyard Blvd., Suite 700  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817-3938  
Telephone (808) 536-1951  
Fax (808) 543-2222  
[www.auw.org](http://www.auw.org)



Aloha United Way

February 9, 2009

Senate Committee on Human Services  
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair  
Tuesday, February 10, 2009 at 2:15 P.M.  
Conference Room 016

**SB 1668: Relating to Human Services – Written Testimony in Support**

Dear Chair Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Ihara and Committee Members:

Aloha United Way encourages your favorable consideration of SB 1668 which eases the eligibility requirements for benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

Aloha United Way believes that benefits such as this can help motivate recipients to move toward self-sufficiency. However, programs that help augment income are only one of the necessary ingredients needed to create self-sufficiency; asset building is also critical. Unfortunately, the State's continued use of the asset test, which considers a household's savings and other non-liquid capital, denies access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program for many in need and encourages behaviors that are contrary to those required to achieve financial stability. Maximizing earnings and saving for the future are qualities we encourage, yet the State's standards penalize those who attempt to achieve this.

Statistics from Aloha United Way's 211 information and referral service show a 66 percent increase in requests for food pantries, an indication of our community's growing food insecurity. Easing of the eligibility requirements for the supplemental nutrition program would help Hawaii's residents rebound and move toward financial independence. At the same time, it would bring in millions of federal dollars in benefits during a time when they are most needed.

Aloha United Way thanks you for the opportunity to testify and we encourage favorable consideration of SB 1668.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Doyle".

Susan Doyle  
President & Chief Professional Officer



Senate HMS Cmte  
Tues, Feb 10, 2009  
2:15 pm  
room 016

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

February 8, 2009

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland  
Members of the Senate Human Services Committee

FROM: Debbie Shimizu, LSW  
National Association of Social Workers, Hawaii Chapter

RE: SB 1668 Relating to Human Services- **SUPPORT INTENT**

Chair Chun Oakland and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Debbie Shimizu, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Hawaii Chapter. NASW is the largest professional organization for social workers in Hawaii. NASW supports the intent of SB 1668.

The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly called the food stamp program, is a federally funded program. In these economically challenging times when many individuals and families are struggling to keep their jobs and homes, we can help make their lives a little easier by supporting them by maximizing the use of federal dollars as we are eligible for.

Currently, Hawaii's participation rate in the food stamp program is only 72%. We must do better. Many states are increasing their asset limits for their SNAP programs. DHS is currently working on expanding SNAP requirements to allow for "categorical eligibility" in its department rules. Additionally, DHS will be raising eligibility for the program from individuals who are at 130% of the FPL to those who are 185% of the federal poverty level.

We appreciate the Department's efforts to change its rules to allow for categorical eligibility. We feel that the mandated language on page 3 of the bill is too prescriptive and may not be allowed by federal rules. We suggest that this language be put in the committee report to express the intent of the Legislature.

Allowing more families to qualify for food assistance, will also help stimulate the economy. According to a 2008 analysis by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), "Lower-income households are...more likely to be among those with the highest propensity to spend. Therefore, policies aimed at lower-income households tend to have greater stimulative effects".

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016

Testifier position:

Testifier will be present: No

Submitted by: Joyce Spinden

Organization: Individual

Address: 2970 Kele St. #203 Lihue, HI 96766

Phone: 652-9272

E-mail: [jspinden@cfs-hawaii.org](mailto:jspinden@cfs-hawaii.org)

Submitted on: 2/9/2009

Comments:

Nana's House and Hale Ho'omaluu, family centers of Child and Family Service distribute food weekly to Kauai's low income and homeless. We have recently seen significant increases in the demand for food and our services.

We secure food from the food bank and distribute to our families weekly, but this alone cannot fully satisfy the hunger needs of our community. Food Stamps/SNAP(Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program); however, holds an important key to eliminate hunger on our island.

We are in support of Senate Bill SB1668 to expand "categorical eligibility" and eliminate the need for an asset test to determine SNAP eligibility. On a bipartisan basis, the U.S. Congress has agreed that asset development is important to help low income Americans transition out of poverty. Accumulating assets clearly allows low income households to mitigate material hardships during periods of unemployment or illness; suffer less of a decline in their living standard during retirement; or make investments in their own education or housing that increase their financial stability. Moreover, Hawaii's current system severely penalizes our kupuna, in particular, for their thrifty saving habits. We support this bill as we feel it will help to stimulate the current economy and feed the hungry people of Hawaii.

If this Bill becomes law, State SNAP workers would no longer have to research, confirm, verify, and conduct interviews on "assets". There will be State savings in worker time and energy to qualify eligible people for food stamps. Currently, 15 States have no asset tests in determining the eligibility of SNAP participation.

We also support raising the gross income guidelines from the current 130% to 185% of poverty for SNAP eligibility, which occurs in tandem with expanded categorical eligibility.

Also, the current 11 page SNAP application is much too long; is overwhelming for many people; and deters them from applying for benefits for which they may be eligible. We support shortening the SNAP application to no more than four pages, as other states have already done.

Thank you for your timely consideration of this important change to Hawaii's SNAP program, which will greatly benefit the people of Hawaii.

Sincerely,

Joyce Spinden  
Program Director  
Nana's House - West side Kauai  
Hale Ho'omalulu - East side Kauai

## ChunOakland3 - Jody

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 09, 2009 4:03 PM  
**To:** HMS Testimony  
**Cc:** ktakahashi@kauai.gov  
**Subject:** Testimony for SB1668 on 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Ludvina K. Takahasi  
Organization: Agency on Elderly Affairs  
Address: 4444 Rice Stree, Suite 330 Lihue, Hawaii  
Phone: 808-241-4470  
E-mail: [ktakahashi@kauai.gov](mailto:ktakahashi@kauai.gov)  
Submitted on: 2/9/2009

Comments:

SB1668, Relating to Human Services

HMS; Chair, Sen Chun-Oakland

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW  
President, 19-3, Democratic Party

**PLEASE PASS THIS BILL!**

Thank you very much for introducing this bill. I realize DHS will testify that this bill is unnecessary because they are doing everything they can to find qualified recipients. They also will say that this is a time for fiscal austerity.

I say: **BUNK!**

In times of fiscal austerity, that is EXACTLY when we have to understand the pressures on our fellow human beings. As jobs are lost and people need food, we MUST open up our food stamp program to ALL who need it.

Please show our humanity and caring by passing this bill.

Thank you.

Aloha, joel

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW  
President, 19-3, Democratic Party

Professor  
University of Hawai'i, School of Social Work  
Henke Hall  
Honolulu, HI 96822

**February 5, 2009**

**Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland  
Chair of Human Services Committee**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL # SB1668**

**Dear Senator Chun Oakland,**

**I volunteered at St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church distributing food to Kauai's needy on a weekly basis. When I was distributing 1 year ago, we'd serve 50-70 people within a 2.5 hour period. Now their Loaves and Fishes program has had to cut their distribution time to just 1 hour and they are serving at least 80 families during that period of time. They shut down when their food has been exhausted.**

**The Loaves and Fishes program secures food from the food bank and distributes it to needy families but this alone can not fully satisfy the hunger needs of our community. Food Stamps/SNAP(Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program); however, holds an important key to eliminate hunger on our island.**

**In these difficult economic times, I support legislation to expand the amount of federal food dollars available to Hawaii's needy people. USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) estimates that every additional \$5 of food stamp benefits can generate \$9.20 in total economic activity.<sup>1</sup> I support this bill as I feel it will help to stimulate the current economy and feed the hungry people of Hawaii.**

**I am in support of Senate Bill SB1668 to expand "categorical eligibility" and eliminate the need for an asset test to determine SNAP eligibility. On a bipartisan basis, the U.S. Congress has agreed that asset development is important to help low income Americans transition out of poverty. Accumulating assets clearly allows low income households to**

**mitigate material hardships during periods of unemployment or illness; suffer less of a decline in their living standard during retirement; or make investments in their own education or housing that increase their financial stability. Moreover, Hawaii's current system severely penalizes our kupuna, in particular, for their thrifty saving habits.**

**If this Bill becomes law, State SNAP workers would no longer have to research, confirm, verify, and conduct interviews on "assets". There will be State savings in worker time and energy to qualify eligible people for food stamps. Currently, 15 States have no asset tests in determining the eligibility of SNAP participation.**

**I also support raising the gross income guidelines from the current 130% to 185% of poverty for SNAP eligibility, which occurs in tandem with expanded categorical eligibility.**

**Also, the current 11 page SNAP application is much too long and is overwhelming for many people. This deters them from applying for benefits for which they may be eligible. I support shortening the SNAP application to no more than four pages, as other states have already done.**

**Thank you for your timely consideration of this important change to Hawaii's SNAP program, which will greatly benefit the people of Hawaii.**

**If you have any questions, please contact me at (808) 652-5598.**

**Sincerely,**

**Wendy Rusaw  
2971B Wawae Road  
Kalaheo, HI 96746**

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Paul Douglass  
Organization: Individual  
Address: 2640 Apapane Street Lihue, HI 96766  
Phone: (808) 245 9207  
E-mail: [paul.doug@hawaiiantel.net](mailto:paul.doug@hawaiiantel.net)  
Submitted on: 2/9/2009

Comments:

Senator Chun-Oakland  
Chair - Human Services Committee  
Dear Senator Chun-Oakland

I am a retired person who has served on the Board of the Kauai Foodbank since 1992. This bill appears to be a "no brainer". By relaxing the eligibility requirements for SNAP/Foodstamps and eliminating some of the obstacles inherent in the present DHS administration of this program you will be getting the biggest bang for our buck...Economic stimulus w/o significant cost. The program is Federally funded, and the efficiencys gained should negate the increased administrative costs alluded to by DHS.

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Analyn B. Flores  
Organization: Individual  
Address: 4436 Pio Street Lihue, HI  
Phone: 808-652-9317  
E-mail: [amicable\\_an@yahoo.com](mailto:amicable_an@yahoo.com)  
Submitted on: 2/9/2009

Comments:

We have Kupunas with a burial fund assets that have a very little income and therefore, they do not qualify currently.

Application is too difficult for Kupunas and people is already stressed out to complete on their own.

Telephone interviews should be allowed as many of these people do not have gas money to go appointments and feel shame to go in face workers are sometime demeaning.

This BILL is very important to the needy people of Hawaii.

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016

Testifier position: support

Testifier will be present: No

Submitted by: Michelle

Organization: Individual

Address: PO Box 2148 Kapaa, HI 96746

Phone: 808-346-1801

E-mail: [mpanoke@yahoo.com](mailto:mpanoke@yahoo.com)

Submitted on: 2/9/2009

Comments:

I support this bill because the application for food stamps is too difficult for elderly people and people who are already stressed out. I also think that elderly people should not have to spend their savings so they can qualify for food stamps. The poverty level needs to be raised because so many people that work full time jobs still are in poverty.

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016

Testifier position: support

Testifier will be present: No

Submitted by: Richard K. Borrero

Organization: Individual

Address: 5469 Kulamau Rd. Kapaa, HI. 96746

Phone: 8086353379

E-mail: [Kekoapookea@hotmail.com](mailto:Kekoapookea@hotmail.com)

Submitted on: 2/9/2009

Comments:

I am speaking on the behalf of people needing of food throughout the State of Hawaii. Due to the fact of economy crisis and the rising of unemployment. People of Hawaii should be able to qualify for assistance for a short period of time until things gets better, regardless of their situation.

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016

Testifier position: support

Testifier will be present: No

Submitted by: Kendra Santos

Organization: Individual

Address: Waiahi Lihue, Hawaii

Phone: 808-246-3455

E-mail: [esaigurl@hotmail.com](mailto:esaigurl@hotmail.com)

Submitted on: 2/9/2009

Comments:

I support it because I see many hungry people in need of food. What the food pantries give out to them, aren't enough to satisfy all these people. As for people with children, they get more help than individuals do but it's still not enough. These children NEED food. Therefore I feel that they should pass the bill for the many hungry children and kupuna's out there.

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016

Testifier position: support

Testifier will be present: No

Submitted by: Kelvin A. Moniz

Organization: Individual

Address: Hanalima St. Lihue, HI

Phone: (808) 212-9565

E-mail: [kmoniz002@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:kmoniz002@hawaii.rr.com)

Submitted on: 2/9/2009

Comments:

I support this bill because it is a WIN-WIN situation for individuals, grocers, and the economy.

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Jill Friedman  
Organization: Individual  
Address: Kekaha, HI  
Phone: 808-635-5919  
E-mail: [jillf2184@yahoo.com](mailto:jillf2184@yahoo.com)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2009

Comments:

I support SB1668. The food stamp(nutritional assistance) program brings federal funds into Hawaii and into the economy as they are immediately spent in stores. It helps stores stay in business and creates jobs. It should be easy to get nutritional assistance, without unnecessary barriers. Low income individuals and families should not have to spend their meager savings in order to buy food. Those savings are a necessity, not a luxury. For instance, the savings are necessary for car repairs so a receipt can get to work, shop for food or go to the doctor. Or to pay for medical expenses not covered by a health plan, such as medicine in many cases.

## ChunOakland3 - Jody

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 09, 2009 4:01 PM  
**To:** HMS Testimony  
**Cc:** hardy@aloha.net  
**Subject:** Testimony for SB1668 on 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Jeni Hardy  
Organization: Individual  
Address: 4515 Emmalani Dr Princeville HI  
Phone: 808 826-7168  
E-mail: [hardy@aloha.net](mailto:hardy@aloha.net)  
Submitted on: 2/9/2009

**Comments:**

We need assistance in this time of need to help people who are going hungry.

## ChunOakland3 - Jody

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 09, 2009 6:04 PM  
**To:** HMS Testimony  
**Cc:** mitchellatkauai@hotmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for SB1668 on 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM

Testimony for HMS 2/10/2009 2:15:00 PM SB1668

Conference room: 016  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: winona mitchell  
Organization: Individual  
Address:  
Phone:  
E-mail: [mitchellatkauai@hotmail.com](mailto:mitchellatkauai@hotmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/9/2009

Comments:

LINDA LINGLE  
GOVERNOR



LILLIAN B. KOLLER, ESQ.  
DIRECTOR  
HENRY OLIVA  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 10, 2009

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **S. B. 1668 - RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 10, 2009, 2:15 p.m.  
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of S.B. 1668 is to ease the eligibility requirements for benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill but must respectfully oppose this measure as it contains provisions that conflict with federal law and it proposes implementation of a complex needs based program without the benefit of administrative rules as required by chapter 91, HRS.

The Department must first point out that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is a federal program administered by the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). There have never been nor are there currently any State statutes that govern SNAP. All program policy and requirements are taken directly from the Code of

Federal Regulations (CFR 7, Parts 271 to 299) and written and promulgated by Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR). It is the Department's understanding that the main purpose for introducing this bill was to speed up the Department's planned implementation of a policy to eliminate asset limits for SNAP by circumventing the administrative rule writing process.

The Department does not believe this is an advisable strategy as the bill does not contain the level of detail necessary to implement a needs-based program. It is very important that all the eligibility requirements be listed in detail and can be cited as the implementation authority. It is equally important that those individuals or households, who are federally barred from participation, must also be listed in clear detail. This bill lacks that level of eligibility and program detail, including program ineligibility, needed to implement a federal needs-based program and avoid legal challenges.

The Department has been researching options for implementing a SNAP expanded categorical eligibility program for several months and has also been assessing the impact such a policy would have on our various other programs. Although the Department fully supports the concept of increasing food aid to low-income families and individuals in Hawaii, careful consideration must be given to how this policy would affect SNAP and our other programs. The SNAP caseload has increased by 14% in the past 12 months due to the economic downturn. The Department anticipates that eliminating asset limits for a large portion of the SNAP population will increase the SNAP caseload by another 5% to 13% (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, December 2008). The DHS staff who process SNAP cases, also handle financial and medical assistance cases and those caseloads have also been experiencing increases. In concert with adopting a policy that will increase eligibility

and caseloads, it is equally as important for the Department to develop strategies, processes, technologies and efficiencies that will enable staff to handle the increases and provide assurances that benefits will be available to eligible individuals in as timely and as accurately a manner as possible.

Cost is also a significant consideration to eliminating SNAP asset limits. The Department pays half of SNAP's administrative costs – currently about \$12 million per year in State general funds. Greatly expanding the caseload, therefore, would impact the State budget at a time when general fund revenue projections have fallen by \$1.4 billion over the past eight months. USDA/FNS also sets national standards that must be met in the area of SNAP application processing for timeliness and payment accuracy. Increased caseload can affect the Department's ability to process applications timely and process payments accurately. If the State fails to meet the national payment and accuracy standards, a fiscal penalty would be imposed by USDA/FNS.

S.B. 1668 also incorrectly suggests that the State has the option to completely eliminate in-person interviews. Face-to-face interviews with a merit employee are a federal requirement of SNAP as a way of reducing fraud. However, Federal law has always allowed telephone interviews if the State can document a household hardship, such as a disability or problems with transportation, employment or childcare. The State also has the option of requesting a waiver of the initial face-to-face without hardship documentation, but the waiver must be limited to no more than 50 percent of the caseload. Waivers of the face-to-face interview requirement at recertification, which are conducted every 12 months after the initial application is approved, are approvable on a statewide basis. The Department applied for such a waiver, to allow

telephone interviews for all SNAP recertification interviews, and the waiver was approved and implemented in 2007.

As for shortening the SNAP application form, this could certainly be accomplished – but it might do more harm than good. In 1991, DHS released a comprehensive application form that makes sure clients receive all the benefits they're entitled to, including SNAP, cash assistance, child care, low income household energy assistance (LIHEAP), and Medicaid. This form, developed over a two-year period with the help and strong consensus of community stakeholders, eliminates the need for clients to fill out multiple forms and visit multiple DHS offices. It also helps DHS process applications more timely, which is important to our beneficiaries.

An estimated 72 percent of eligible Hawaii residents – more than 104,000 individuals – are enrolled in SNAP. The U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded a high-performance bonus to DHS in October 2008 for having the nation's fourth-best participation rate in SNAP and for being number-one in improving access to qualified residents.

Still, 28 percent of Hawaii residents could enroll in SNAP but simply do not apply, for a variety of reasons. Often pride and misconceptions stand in the way.

DHS believes the best way to further increase SNAP participation is focusing on the estimated 28 percent of Hawaii residents who are already eligible for SNAP but not enrolled. DHS is already working to enroll these people by partnering with the University of Hawaii and the Department of Health on a nutrition education and outreach program. DHS will soon expand outreach efforts through a new project involving local food banks.

DHS is committed to providing food aid for everyone who is eligible. DHS is also committed to going about this in the right way, which includes promulgating administrative rules.

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