

**LATE**



**SB2135**

**RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

February 12, 2024

1:02 pm

Conference Room 225

---

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) provides testimony in **SUPPORT** for SB 2135, which seeks to address critical challenges faced by low-income households in Hawaii by expanding eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). **OHA wishes to highlight that this legislation is a vital step towards ensuring the economic stability and nutritional security of our communities.**

OHA recognizes the inherent struggles faced by low-income households in affording basic necessities, particularly in a state with a prohibitive cost of living such as Hawaii. The legislation rightly demonstrates the flaws in the current eligibility criteria, highlighting the plight of families just above the two hundred percent federal poverty level who, despite being ineligible for SNAP benefits, still grapple with meeting their basic needs, as emphasized by the 2023 ALICE report.<sup>1</sup>

The 200% poverty level cutoff creates a benefits cliff that can have significant impact on families. It can serve to discourage individuals from maximizing their earning potential, as even a minor increase in income can result in substantial losses in SNAP benefits that are not made up by slightly higher wages. This counterproductive dynamic hinders economic growth and perpetuates the cycle of poverty among residents, including our Native Hawaiian community.

The economic impact of SNAP cannot be overstated. It supports over 130,000 individuals. By raising the SNAP benefits ceiling to 300% of the federal poverty level, SB2135 seeks to bridge the gap for economically vulnerable households, ensuring they can meet their basic needs without sacrificing financial security.

---

<sup>1</sup> United For ALICE. (2023). "ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Hawai'i." <https://www.UnitedForALICE.org/Hawaii>



**SB 2135**  
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

---

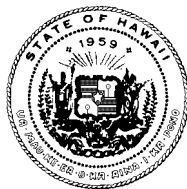
OHA recognizes that the proposed eligibility increase would mean that the difference between 200 and 300% federal poverty level will need to be state-funded. We believe this is a worthwhile investment that will support families. This funding will subsidize SNAP benefits for those who do not qualify for federal assistance, a crucial step in supporting our Native Hawaiian families and fostering their overall well-being. We also believe this investment will pay dividends for our economy. Last year, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported that the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated that \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.50 in economic activity.<sup>2</sup> We understand that the Department of Human Services does not currently have estimates for the cost of this program and welcome working with them to understand both the investment needed and the financial benefit to Native Hawaiians and all of Hawai‘i.

SB2135 is not only a humanitarian imperative but also an investment in the economic prosperity of our state. OHA urges the Committee to **advance SB 2135**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Hawai‘i Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#), Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, February 13, 2023

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



CATHY BETTS  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

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

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

February 8, 2024

To: The Honorable Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2135 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

Hearing: February 12, 2024, Time 1:02 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, and requests clarifications. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to increase the monthly income eligibility limit for a supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) applicant or recipient households earning equal to two hundred percent and no more than three hundred percent of the federal poverty level and who meet all other criteria for the United States Department of Agriculture to be eligible for SNAP benefits.

Hawaii's SNAP program is currently utilizing a State option, Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE), to allow for a higher gross income for SNAP eligibility by increasing the federal standard of 130 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 200 percent FPL. However, the SNAP program still requires a net income test as well to determine eligibility and benefit amount depending on the size of the applicant's household. The net income is determined based on allowable deductions, as defined by federal SNAP regulations, applied to the

applicant's countable gross income. The net income eligibility standard is set at 100 percent FPL. For reference, the below chart is an example of the monthly dollar amount of the different FPL percentages for the 2024 federal fiscal year by household size:

Household Size	100 % FPL	130% FPL	200% FPL
1	\$1,398	\$1,817	\$2,796
2	\$1,890	\$2,457	\$3,780
3	\$2,383	\$3,098	\$4,766
4	\$2,875	\$3,738	\$5,750
5	\$3,368	\$4,378	\$6,736

Federal regulations set these income eligibility standards. If the State wishes to utilize standards beyond what the federal government sets, it would be purely a State-funded effort.

The Department is unable to determine the number of applicants at this time that may potentially be eligible for this program as there is no tracking process of the number of households who are not already on SNAP who fall below 300 percent FPL. Therefore, we are unable to determine if the proposed \$50 million annual general fund appropriation figure will be sufficient to meet the demand. DHS is also unsure what would be the recourse should funding be insufficient to meet the demand for this benefit in years when state revenues are limited.

DHS also requests clarification as to whether the proposed state-funded benefit would be accessible to residents who are not U.S. citizens.

In addition to the cost of the benefits, implementation and operating costs would need to be considered. DHS will require an appropriation for system development to carry out this program and additional staffing to accommodate a caseload increase. Additionally, appropriations for an increase in payment transactions, account management, and card issuance by our electronic benefit transfer (EBT) provider are also needed.

This proposed program would also require the development of new rules and administrative processes to determine eligibility for these households in addition to system modifications to the SNAP eligibility system. The Department is currently developing a new eligibility system. The new eligibility system is scheduled for statewide rollout and implementation in the fall of 2024. System modifications to implement changes proposed in

February 8, 2024

Page 3

this measure could begin only after the implementation of the new eligibility system and would require the adoption of rules to finalize the system modifications.

DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace budget priorities identified in the executive budget. Further, DHS requests an extended effective date beyond the fall of 2024 to give the agency enough time to make any adjustments to the new eligibility system before developing and implementing this new program.

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



1001 Bishop Street | Suite 625 | Honolulu, HI 96813-2830  
1-866-295-7282 | Fax: 808-536-2882  
aarp.org/hi | [aarphi@aarp.org](mailto:aarphi@aarp.org) | [twitter.com/AARPHawaii](https://twitter.com/AARPHawaii)  
[facebook.com/AARPHawaii](https://facebook.com/AARPHawaii)

**The State Legislature**  
**Senate Committee on Health And Human Services**  
**Monday, February 12, 2024**  
**Conference Room 225, 1:02 PM**

TO: The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
FROM: Keali'i Lopez, State Director, AARP Hawai'i  
RE: Strong Support for S.B. 2135 Relating to Expanding SNAP Eligibility

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keali'i Lopez, and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization that advocates for individuals age 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and nearly 140,000 in Hawaii. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families. **AARP strongly supports S.B. 2135 which provides supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits for individuals and households whose monthly income is equal to or less than three hundred per cent of the federal poverty level.**

Older workers and retirees living on a fixed income already know all too well that inflation and rising food prices are stretching household budgets in ways that make it harder to put food on the table. Some of them may face life challenges as they age—such as experiencing a medical crisis, job loss, or death of a spouse or other loved one—that may result in financial instability and make it difficult to afford food. For example, newly widowed older adults experience higher poverty rates, greater housing cost burdens, and challenges to getting the help they need.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are a crucial ingredient in the food budgets for many Hawaii residents especially kūpuna. Food assistance for low-income older adults is essential; food insecurity has significant negative impacts on older adults, particularly on their health. Older adults who are food insecure are more likely than their food-secure counterparts to have limitations on activities of daily living, have conditions like diabetes and depression, and experience heart attacks. Research shows that SNAP enrollment among older adults is associated with fewer hospital and emergency room visits and long-term care admissions. Enrolling in SNAP can also lead to increased well-being, especially among older adults. As inflation continues driving up the costs of groceries and other necessities, programs like SNAP that help eligible older adults are especially important. SNAP benefits increase food security and reduce monthly food costs. Expanding the eligibility for more people to qualify for SNAP benefits can help ensure low-income kūpuna have the resources they need. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify in strong support of S.B. 2135.



# HAWAII APPLESEED

## CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice  
Support for S.B. 2135 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Monday, February 12, 2024, at 1:02PM

---

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **S.B. 2135**, which proposes to utilize state funds to expand eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to households making up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL).

Hawai'i Appleseed is committed to a more socially and economically just Hawai'i, where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve economic security and fulfill their potential. The strengthening of SNAP and other safety net programs are critical to achieving this vision. Serving more than 130,000 residents and generating \$630 million annually in our state's local economy, SNAP is an economic lifeline that is failing to reach Hawai'i's struggling households.

In a recent assessment of Hawai'i's SNAP population, our organization found that the federal income eligibility thresholds are too strict and do not adequately reflect Hawai'i's cost of living.<sup>1</sup> A household survival budget for a family of four in Hawai'i is \$104,000 according to a recent Aloha United Way report.<sup>2</sup> The current SNAP eligibility cut off of 200% FPL (\$69,000 for a family of 4) leaves more than 1450,000 ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households unable to achieve self-sufficiency yet ineligible for any meaningful support to access food in the face of rising costs and stagnant wages.<sup>3</sup>

In light of the rigid federally set requirements, elected officials in places like Washington, D.C. and Oregon are also considering creating state-funded programs to supplement the federal SNAP program to better serve and reach their ineligible, food insecure populations. The proposed expansion of SNAP eligibility to 300% of the FPL in Hawai'i aligns with these forward-thinking initiatives and reflects a commitment to addressing the unique economic challenges faced by our residents.

While Appleseed supports the intent of this bill, we would like to note the additional administrative responsibility required by the Hawai'i Department of Human Services to expand SNAP. We recommend that any appropriation of funds reflects the need for any support for additional administrative staff, technical upgrades, or training for existing eligibility workers.

Thank you for considering these comments in your deliberation of S.B. 2135. SNAP is one of our most important safety nets and also provides a significant stimulus to Hawai'i's local economy. A targeted approach to strengthening this program will be an enormous boost for all Hawai'i residents.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. Hawai'i SNAP: Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Food Security for Hawai'i Residents, January 2023.

<sup>2</sup> [2023 ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Hawai'i](#)

<sup>3</sup> [2023 ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Hawai'i](#)



**HIPHI Board**

- Misty Pacheco, DrPH  
*Chair*  
*University of Hawai'i at Hilo*
- Titiimaea Ta'ase, JD  
*Secretary*  
*State of Hawai'i, Deputy Public Defender*
- Carissa Holley, MEd  
*Treasurer*  
*Hale Makua Health Services*
- Keshia Adolpho, LCSW  
*Na'au Healing Center*
- Debbie Erskine  
*ARCH-MEPS Consulting LLC, Owner*
- Camonia Graham - Tutt, PhD  
*University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu*
- Jennifer José Lo, MD  
*Hawai'i Health Partners*
- May Okihiro, MD, MS  
*John A. Burns School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics*
- Kathleen Roche, MS, RN, CENP  
*Kaiser Permanente*
- Dina Shek, JD  
*Medical-Legal Partnership For Children in Hawai'i*
- Garret Sugai  
*HMSA*
- JoAnn Tsark, MPH  
*John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native Hawaiian Research Office*

**HIPHI Initiatives**

- Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i
- Community-Based Research & Evaluation
- Community Health Worker Initiatives
- COVID-19 Response
- Environmental Health
- Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions
- Hawai'i Farm to School Hui
- 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: February 11, 2024

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

Re: SB 2135 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

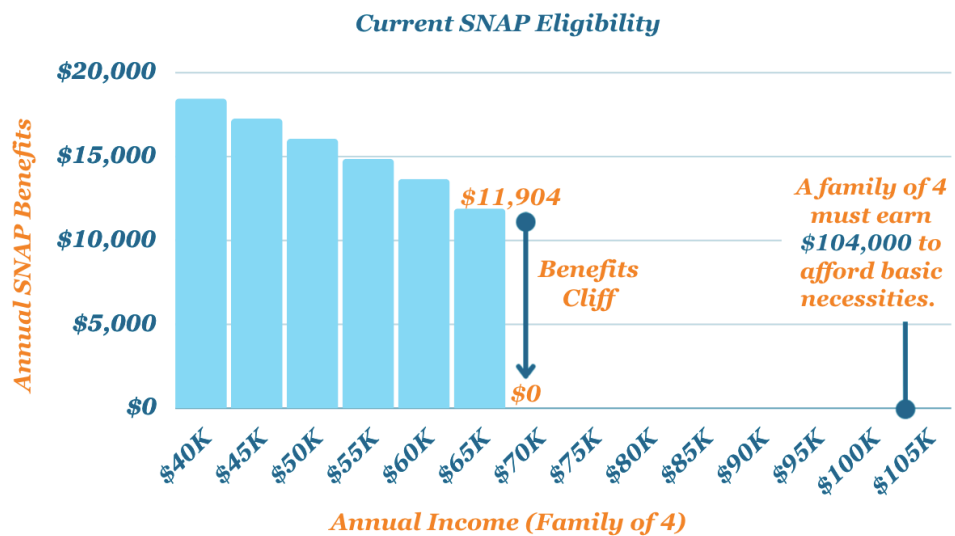
Hrg: Monday, February 12, 2024 1:02 pM

Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Institute<sup>i</sup> appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **Support of SB2135**, which would expand SNAP benefits to those with incomes up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.

**Helping ALICE Families**

Expanding the SNAP income threshold to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) will help the more than 150,000 people<sup>ii</sup> who earn too much to qualify for SNAP, but too little to afford their basic needs. These families need assistance to make ends meet but are not getting it.

In Hawai'i, a family of 4 needs to earn more than \$104,000 to survive financially. In order for that family of 4 to qualify for benefits, their income cannot exceed 200% of the FPL which is about \$69,000.<sup>iii</sup> Providing SNAP benefits to these "gap" households--with incomes between \$69,000 and \$103,000 for a family of 4--will help them survive. They will have enough money to afford healthy and nutritious groceries.

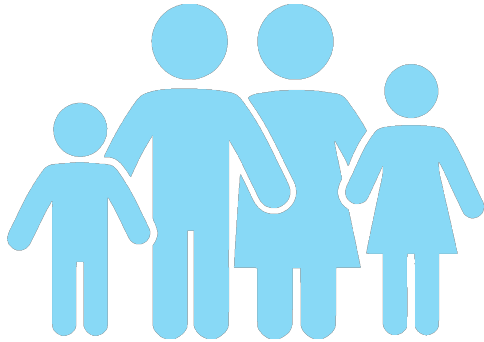




### Worse off Earning More

SNAP-eligible families who earn just below 200% of the FPL are faced with a no-win decision. They need to earn more to be comfortable, but the system currently discourages them from increasing their income. Because the moment they earn more than \$69,000 they lose all of their SNAP benefits. This loss equates to more than \$10,000 annually.

After-tax spending power for an average family of 4 earning \$65,000 and receiving SNAP benefits is roughly \$64,000. Compare that to a family of 4 making \$70,000 who is ineligible for SNAP benefits and has after-tax spending power of only \$56,000.



<b>Cost of Living for a Family of 4:</b>	\$104,000
<b>Parent #1 wage:</b>	\$14.00 per hour
<b>Parent #2 wage:</b>	\$17.25 per hour
<b>Annual Income:</b>	\$65,000
<b>SNAP Benefits:</b>	\$12,000
<b>After-tax Spending Power:</b>	\$64,000

<b>Cost of Living for a Family of 4:</b>	\$104,000
<b>Parent #1 wage:</b>	\$16.50 per hour
<b>Parent #2 wage:</b>	\$17.25 per hour
<b>Annual Income:</b>	\$70,000
<b>SNAP Benefits:</b>	\$0
<b>After-tax Spending Power:</b>	\$56,000

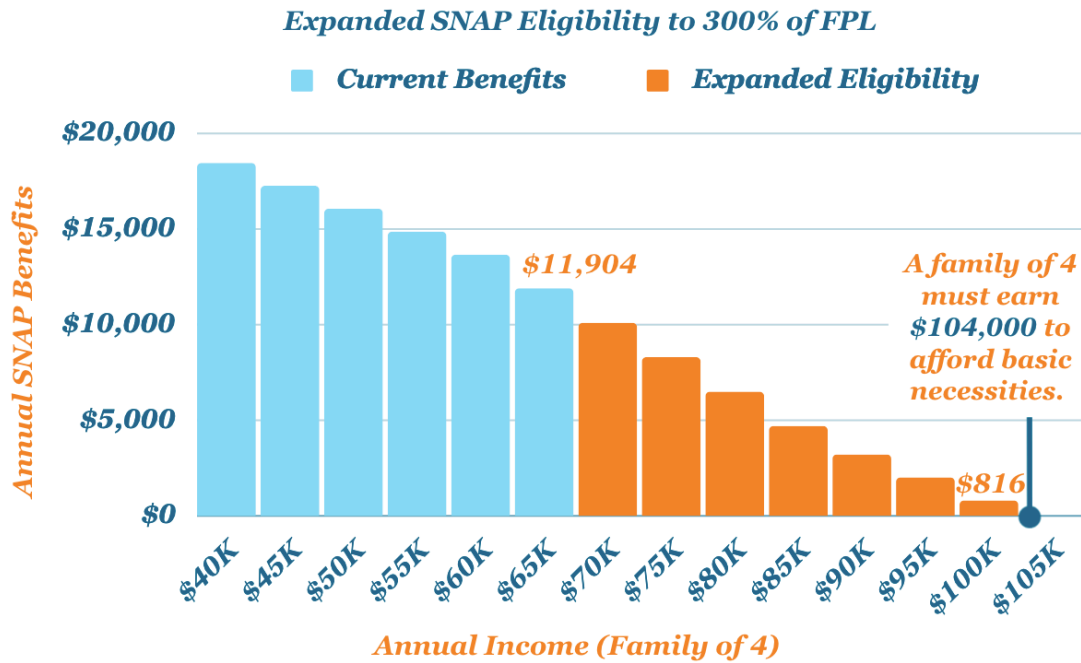
A SNAP participant earning \$14 per hour needs to receive more than a 50% raise (\$21 per hour) to not lose out on a substantial amount of liveable income. A raise of any less than that would cost them more money because they would lose their SNAP benefits. This sudden loss of benefits is referred to as the “SNAP Cliff”.

If, that employee did not get a 50% raise, they would need to work an additional 22 hours per week to not be worse off financially after falling off the SNAP benefits cliff. That means 22 more hours away from their children with absolutely no financial benefit, effectively working for \$0 per hour.

No one would choose to work extra hours or receive pay raises if it ultimately costs them money and puts them into a worse financial situation than when they earned a lower salary. This massive SNAP benefits cliff results in a large portion of the population being discouraged from increasing their earnings.

## Building a Pathway out of Poverty

Once SNAP benefits are expanded to serve those who earn 300% of the FPL, working families can take advantage of opportunities for raises and to work extra hours. Hawai'i can begin building a pathway for residents that leads out of poverty rather than keeping them trapped in situations that have no realistic, financially feasible way to move out of low income.



## Increased Health and Prosperity

By expanding SNAP eligibility, we can increase the health and well-being of our population. Food insecurity affects more than 1 in 6 local residents and results in higher risks of heart disease, stress, depression, and other chronic diseases.<sup>iv</sup> Our population will be better off if they know where their next meal is coming from. HB 1661 can help make this a reality.

We look forward to working with the legislature and the Department of Human Services to ensure they have the necessary information and support they need to successfully implement this proposed program.

Sincerely,

Nate Hix

Social Impact Policy Manager  
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

<sup>i</sup> 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.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT1Y2022.B17002?q=poverty%20ratio&g=040XX00US15>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/snap/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/what-are-the-implications-of-food-insecurity-for-health-and-health-care/>



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

#### Executive Officers

**Gary Okimoto**, Safeway Hawaii, *Chair*  
**Maile Miyashiro**, C&S Wholesale Grocer, *Vice Chair*  
**Kit Okimoto**, Okimoto Corp., *Secretary/Treas.*  
**Lauren Zirbel**, HFIA, *Executive Director*  
**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, *Immediate Past Chair*

---

TO: Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION  
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 12, 2024  
TIME: 1:02pm  
PLACE: Room 225

RE: SB2135 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.

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

The simple fact is that many Hawaii families who need assistance do not currently qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Hawaii's high cost of living is a challenge for many families. Recent inflation and other factors have worsened the problem of food insecurity for many here in Hawaii.

This measure would ensure that more Hawaii residents who need food assistance have access to it. This measure would also help reduce the negative impacts of the benefits cliff that forces some families to choose between economic advancement and losing benefits. This benefits cliff disincentivizes career advancement which has a negative impact on our workforce. Eliminating the benefits cliff is a common sense way to may SNAP more functional and equitable.

It's important to note that SNAP does not just benefit SNAP recipients. By injecting consistent and predictable Federal and state funds into our local food systems SNAP helps keep the whole food system stable for all consumers. Support for SNAP is support for Hawaii's entire food system including local farmers, local food and beverage producers and manufacturers, local retailers, and all Hawaii customers.

For these reasons we encourage the Committee to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 5:32:28 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Doris Matsunaga	Testifying for Save Medicaid Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Save Medicaid Hawaii supports SB 2135 RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.



February 12, 2024

Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura  
Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino  
Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole  
Sen. Maile S.L. Shimabukuro  
Sen. Brenton Awa

Re: SB2135 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters. On behalf of HSCADV and our 27 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in support of SB2135.

Survivors of domestic violence face many challenges when making decisions about their safety. One of the most crucial factors is their finances. The ability to provide for themselves and their families is a key economic consideration for survivors when deciding to leave an abusive partner. It's also important to recognize the impact that financial abuse can have on survivors and to support them in any way possible, including the ability to take full advantage of safety net programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Survivors of domestic violence are among the many low-income households that need help to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which a household earns an additional \$1 per month can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year.

Please pass SB2135, ensuring that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families and survivors.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,  
Angelina Mercado, Executive Director



COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

BILL: SB2135  
 POSITION: SUPPORT

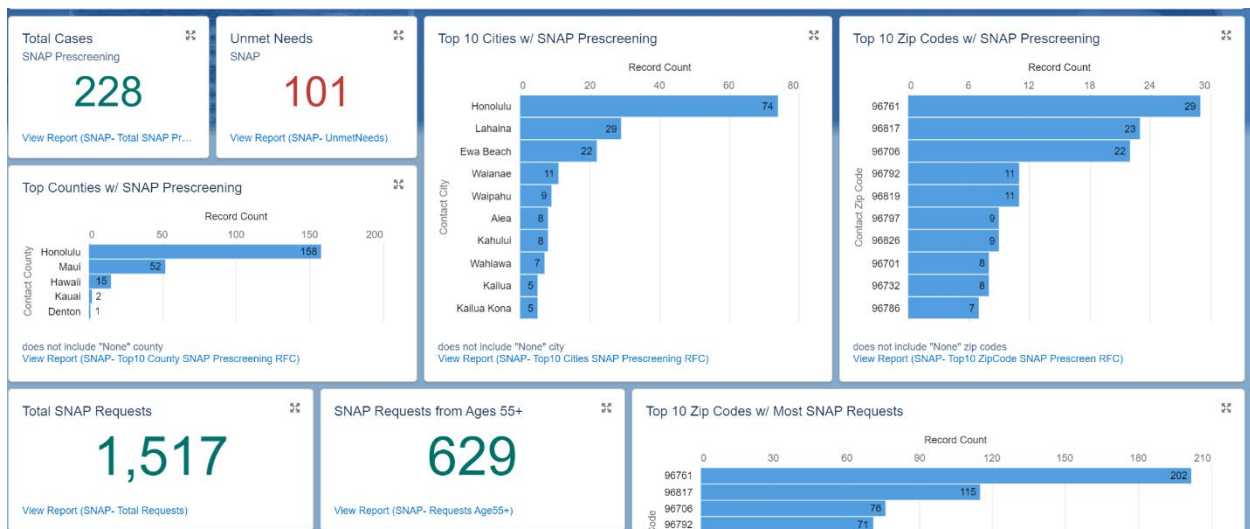
Hearing Date: February 12, 2024 1:02PM

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

Aloha United Way supports SB2135, which expands eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to households whose monthly income is equal to or less than three hundred percent of the federal poverty level.

Food insecurity has doubled since the pandemic, making 1 in every 6 individuals in our state food insecure. This not only impacts those in poverty, but our ALICE households as well, many of whom do not meet the income requirements for SNAP eligibility. Recent data shows that 44% of our community is living below the ALICE threshold. **ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed**, and refers to households who are employed but whose incomes are not sufficient to meet their basic costs.

Aloha United Way’s 211 Information & Referral call center has been the primary entity conducting SNAP prescreening in our community since FY2018. In 2023 alone, 211 received 1,517 SNAP requests, 629 of which came from kupuna. Of those, 228 were deemed eligible, leaving 1,289 households without access to these benefits.



Increasing SNAP eligibility to 300% of the FPL will allow households to avoid the disastrous benefits cliff that so many are falling into now. Countless SNAP requests are denied for the applicant making “too much”, and yet, Food as a category remains the second highest requested need from callers after affordable housing. This signals that the current limits of 200% of the FPL is simply insufficient to meet the need that this program was designed for.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your action to support Hawaii’s households with this lifesaving program. We urge you to pass SB2135.

Sincerely,



Kayla Keehu- Alexander  
Vice President, Community Impact  
Aloha United Way



Suzanne Skjold  
Chief Operating Officer  
Aloha United Way

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 5:13:50 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Megan Fox	Testifying for Malama Kaua'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SNAP is a lifeline for our local families, yet over 50% of our food insecure in Hawai'i cannot qualify for it. This will even the playing field so that more families who need it can qualify.





## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2135: RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i  
Hearing: **Monday, 2/12/24; 1:02 PM; Videoconference and Room 225**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in Strong Support of SB 2135** which expands eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to individuals and households whose monthly income is equal to or less than 300% of the federal poverty level, and appropriates funds. I am Rob Van Tassell with Catholic Charities Hawai'i. **This bill could be life changing for many working families in Hawai'i.**

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. This bill is one of our top 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. Many of Hawaii families have insufficient food. SNAP is a godsend for those who qualify. Yet making even \$1 over the current eligibility limit of 200% of the federal poverty level can result in losing hundreds of dollars of food benefits each month. Can you imagine the stress of trying to feed your family with a refrigerator that's often bare?

This bill addresses this basic necessity for those who face that benefit cliff and loss of food security for their families. **Raising the income eligibility to 300% of the federal poverty level would help many families in the ALICE population.** They are struggling with Hawaii's great increases in food costs as well as rent and other necessities. In order to keep its workforce, Hawai'i must expand the safety net for food. This bill would provide immediate monthly help with food when individuals and families need it the most.

Take action now! Help our workforce to remain in Hawaii, and give hope for a better and healthier life for their children. We urge your support for SB 2135.

If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson at (808) 527-4813.



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



**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 5:44:16 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Doris Matsunaga	Testifying for Indivisible Hawaii Healthcare Team	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Indivisible Hawaii Healthcare Team supports SB2135 which expands eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to include any individual or household whose monthly income is equal to or less than three hundred percent of the federal poverty level.



#### 2024 Network Members

City and County of Honolulu  
County of Hawai'i  
Hawai'i Appleseed  
Hawai'i Children's Action Network  
Hawai'i Department of Agriculture  
Hawai'i Food Bank  
Hawai'i Good Food Alliance  
Hawai'i Public Health Institute  
Kōkua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center  
Lanakila Pacific  
Mālama Kaua'i  
Maui Nui Food Alliance  
Parents and Children Together  
Supersistence  
The Food Basket Inc., Hawai'i Island's Food Bank  
The Pantry, by Feeding Hawai'i Together  
UH Center for Indigenous Innovation/ Health Equity  
Wai'anāe Coast Comprehensive Health Center  
  
Hawaiihungeraction.org

## Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

February 12, 2024, 1:00PM

### **RE: SUPPORT for SB 2135, RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

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

The Hawai'i Hunger Action Network, a coalition of more than twenty local organizations with the mission to advocate for food security for Hawai'i households, appreciates the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT of SB 2135**. This bill would extend the income eligibility thresholds for SNAP benefits to Hawai'i's Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) population.

The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a vital lifeline for nearly 100,000 Hawai'i families. However, as many of our network members can attest, there are thousands of families across the state that fall just over the income eligibility requirements for the program, yet still struggle to put food on the table. In fact, the Aloha United Way estimates that there are approximately 145,000 ALICE households in the state that don't meet the federal eligibility thresholds, yet still fall far below the estimated income required to survive in Hawai'i.

One of the very troubling realities of SNAP eligibility is a phenomenon known as a "benefits cliff," where even a small increase in income can result in tipping someone over the threshold. This means that residents have to weigh the benefits of accepting a pay raise and losing their monthly SNAP benefits. This legislation would provide a tapering affect, so that rather than losing the entire monthly allotment once the threshold is exceeded, families could continue to receive a lower monthly benefit (until they reach 300% of the federal poverty level).

Mahalo for hearing this bill, and for considering our testimony. Extending SNAP eligibility to our ALICE population will be a tremendous relief for struggling families as well as a positive stimulus to Hawai'i's economy.



February 12, 2024

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

**RE: Testimony in support of SB 2135, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

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

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, **I support SB 2135**, which would expand eligibility for SNAP to include any individual or household whose monthly income equal to or less than 300% of the federal poverty level.

Food security is a critical issue in Hawai'i, where one in six residents lacks 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. However, Hawai'i's high cost of living means that many households who are currently not eligible for SNAP are still food insecure; the majority of those served through the Foodbank's network are not receiving SNAP benefits. Our service numbers continue to tick up, and the story we hear over and over is of people who are working one, two, or sometimes three jobs, and are simply no longer able to make ends meet. They make too much money to qualify for SNAP, but not enough to provide healthy, balanced meals for their families.

SB 2135 would provide more food insecure families with SNAP benefits, reducing the burden on the charitable food system to meet the needs of our food insecure communities across the State.

Hawai'i Foodbank is Hawai'i's largest hunger relief organization, fiercely dedicated to our mission of nourishing our 'ohana today while working to end hunger tomorrow. We work with a network of 200 partner agencies across O'ahu and Kaua'i to provide food assistance to an average of more than 150,000 people each month. Last year, we distributed food for more than 16.2 million meals across the islands we directly serve, including 5 million pounds of fresh produce. Together with the Maui Food Bank, serving Maui County, and The Food Basket, serving Hawai'i Island, our network of food banks and partner agencies provide food assistance to all those facing hunger across the State.

Mahalo for your consideration.

With aloha,

Amy Miller  
President and CEO  
Hawai'i Foodbank

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Re: **SB 2135 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**  
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference  
February 12, 2024, 1:02 PM

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

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of SB 2135**. This bill expands eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to include any individual or household whose monthly income is equal to or less than three hundred per cent of the federal poverty level.

According to Feeding America, more than 50,000 – or one in six – Hawai'i children are facing hunger.<sup>1</sup> It is well established that the stresses of childhood poverty have both immediate and long-term effects on keiki's physical and mental health, behavioral self-control, academic achievement, and earnings as adults.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, a single parent with one child needed to earn nearly \$70,000 per year – or over \$5,800 per month – in order to be “self sufficient” in our state in 2022.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, our state's current income eligibility cutoff to qualify for SNAP for a family of two is \$3,780 per month.<sup>4</sup> In Hawai'i, nearly two-thirds of SNAP participants are in families with children.<sup>5</sup>

This bill would raise SNAP's income eligibility limit closer to our own state's self-sufficiency standard, which would help relieve the stresses of food insecurity and poverty that threaten our keiki's well-being and futures.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Woo  
Director of Research and Economic Policy

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hawaii>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/indicator/2014/06/childhood-poverty>

<sup>3</sup> [https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/reports/self-sufficiency/self-sufficiency\\_2022.pdf](https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/reports/self-sufficiency/self-sufficiency_2022.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/snap/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap\\_factsheet\\_hawaii.pdf](https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_hawaii.pdf)



## TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

FEBRUARY 12, 2024

### SB 2135, RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** SB 2135, relating to the supplemental nutrition assistance program. Pursuant to the "Economic Justice and Labor" section of the official Democratic Party of Hawai'i platform, the party "supports government investments of tax revenue in community development, government anti-poverty programs, and the transition to a sustainable, green economy."

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of our state's most economically disadvantaged residents.

Currently, households with incomes above 200 percent of the federal poverty level, as established by the United States Department of Agriculture, are ineligible for SNAP benefits. Yet, these households are still unable to achieve self-sufficiency. As highlighted by the 2023 ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) report, a family of four earning an income of \$69,000 per year is ineligible for SNAP benefits, but needs an income of

over \$100,000 per year to meet its basic needs, including housing and food. If the family earned just \$1,000 less per year, or \$68,000, it would be eligible to receive more than \$9,000 in SNAP benefits.

The 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff, in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Moreover, the SNAP benefits cliff disincentivizes individuals from reaching their greatest earning potential. Families just below the SNAP income eligibility threshold often decline pay increases because the financial benefit of pursuing economic opportunities does not exceed the potential cost of losing SNAP food assistance.

Studies show that SNAP is the most effective anti-hunger initiative in the country. In Hawai'i, the program supports over 130,000 individuals, bringing more than \$630,000,000 into the State's economy each year. Raising the SNAP benefits ceiling to 300 percent of the federal poverty level will help economically vulnerable households meet their basic needs without sacrificing their financial security. This can be done by appropriating state funding to cover the cost of SNAP benefits for families who do not qualify for federal assistance, with households who currently qualify for federal benefits continuing to receive federal aid, just as they do today.

**That said, if the committee finds that this proposal is too costly, we urge you to use this measure as a vehicle to establish a third-party study or a working group to evaluate ways to address the SNAP cliff.** Such information would be valuable in providing options about how to resolve this matter in future years, so that working families do not go hungry.

Mahalo nui loa,

**Kris Coffield**

*Co-Chair, Legislative Committee*  
(808) 679-7454  
kriscoffield@gmail.com

**Abby Simmons**

*Co-Chair, Legislative Committee*  
(808) 352-6818  
abbyalana808@gmail.com



Cade Watanabe, Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Gemma G. Weinstein, President

Eric W. Gill, Senior Vice-President

February 11, 2024

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

### **Testimony in Support of SB2135**

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

UNITE HERE Local 5 represents 10,000 working people in the health care, hotel, and food service industries across Hawaii. We are in support of SB2135, which would expand eligibility for SNAP benefits.

As the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* reported on December 28, 2023: “A new study from nonprofit Hunger Free America found that 137,000 people across the state lived in food-insecure households between 2020 and 2022 — including 14.7% of children, 8.3% of employed adults and 4.4% of older residents.”<sup>1</sup>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s most recent report<sup>2</sup> on household food security found that 17 million households nationwide (12.8%) were food insecure, a significant increase from 2020 and 2021. The report found that food insecurity increased even among children.

Food prices have increased significantly over the last few years, along with prices for other consumer goods, health care, housing, and interest rates. Credit card balances are the highest they have been in 20 years.<sup>3</sup> We need to do what we can to ease the costs of necessities like food for working families across Hawaii. SB2135 would help in moving toward that goal.

Thank you for your consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Food insecurity rises in Hawaii amid increasing costs,” *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, 12/28/23.

<https://www.staradvertiser.com/2023/12/28/hawaii-news/food-insecurity-rises-in-hawaii-amid-increasing-costs/>

<sup>2</sup> “Household Food Security in the United States in 2022”, U.S. Department of Agriculture, October 2023.

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=107702>

<sup>3</sup> “Credit Cards: The Trillion-Dollar Debt,” Jeannette Bennett, Federal Reserve Branch of St. Louis, December 2023.

<https://research.stlouisfed.org/publications/page1-econ/2023/12/01/credit-cards-the-trillion-dollar-debt>





**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Monday, February 12, 2024, at 1:02PM  
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference**

**RE: SB2135 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

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

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber") **supports SB2135**, which expands eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to include any individual or household whose monthly income is equal to or less than three hundred per cent of the federal poverty level and appropriates funds.

The Chamber supports legislation that benefits the local community and our quality of life. Hawaii's high cost of living is a challenge identified by the Chamber's 2030 Blueprint Hawaii strategic plan to improve economic competitiveness. Many ALICE families in Hawaii experience food insecurity but do not currently qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). They stand to benefit from the passage of this measure.

In the Blueprint plan, careful planning and collaboration among government, businesses, and communities to foster sustainable economic development was identified as a clear way forward to address this problem. Another recommendation identified in the 2030 Blueprint Hawaii initiative was to diversify the economy by expanding access to local food products. This measure, if passed, would expand the eligibility for and increase the application of SNAP, thereby incentivizing local food production further while contributing to the mitigation of our food insecurity dilemma.

This measure would ensure that more Hawaii residents who need food assistance have access to it. The current SNAP benefits "cliff" disincentivizes economic advancement which contributes to our workforce shortage.

It's important to note that SNAP does not just benefit SNAP recipients. By injecting consistent and predictable Federal and state funds into our local food systems SNAP helps keep the whole food system stable for all consumers as well as local providers. Support for increased access to SNAP is support for Hawaii's entire food system including local farmers, diversification of our economy, local food and beverage producers and manufacturers, local retailers, and all Hawaii customers. The Chamber is in alignment with the positive impacts that come with the passage of this measure.

The Chamber is Hawaii's leading statewide business advocacy organization, representing about 2,000+ businesses. Approximately 80% of our members are small businesses with less than 20 employees. As the "Voice of Business" in Hawaii, the organization works on behalf of members and the entire business community to improve the state's economic climate and to foster positive action on issues of common concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Parents And  
Children Together

BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS  
THAT MATTER MOST

**LATE**

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2135 RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**TO:** Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, & Members,  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

**FROM:** Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO

**DATE:** February 12, 2024 at 1:02 PM

**Parents and Children Together (PACT) offers testimony in support of SB 2135 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, which expands eligibility for SNAP to include any individual or household whose monthly income is equal to or less than three hundred per cent of the federal poverty level and appropriates funds.

Founded in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Through our programs, we are seeing the rise in food insecurity that our local families face. Even working families who have not previously needed help with food have started to request and accept it. We saw this increase start during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and increase through the rise of inflation and the 2023 Maui wildfire crisis. In response, we have increased direct food and financial assistance to program participants in the Kalihi and Maui communities. Additionally, we support survivors of domestic violence through the financial impact of keeping their families safe, which often includes leaving their abusive financial provider partner. Many of the survivors we serve struggle through houselessness and loss of income. Increased access to SNAP benefits would help these families achieve and/or maintain basic stability.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or [rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org](mailto:rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org) if you have any questions.



**LATE**

**Senate Committee on Health and Human Services**

**Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports: SB2135**

Monday, February 12th, 2024 1:02 p.m. Conference Room 225

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

HAPA supports HB2135 which expands eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to include any individual or household whose monthly income is equal to or less than three hundred per cent of the federal poverty level..

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Please pass this proposal, which will ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families.

Please support HB2135.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick  
Executive Director

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 2:24:28 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alex Steppe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo nui in advance for considering my written testimony.

I'm writing in support of bill SB1235. The potential impact of broadening eligibility criteria is significant and far-reaching. This change would certainly extend our reach in efforts to address food security, which has progressively worsened since the pandemic. We cannot truly address food security without also considering food sovereignty. Supplemental nutrition programs address an immediate need by providing food to those who need it while supporting associated programs/organizations that aim to strengthen our state's agricultural infrastructure. Without the latter, we will never realize food sovereignty, which has many long-term implications for food security, public health, and community resiliency, to name a few. Furthermore, the positive economic impact of these programs has already been well established. Expanding the eligibility criteria means exponentially more dollars for our local economy. It's truly a win-win situation.

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 3:04:21 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Deb Nehmad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

PLease support

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 5:17:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Anne Leake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of SB2135 because of my experience at my church's food pantry. I have helped many people apply for food stamps when they enroll in our program, only to have them turned down because they made just a little bit too much money. Anyone who waits in line for canned goods clearly has food insecurity. Even though to income guidelines increase every year, this has not kept pace with inflation for the cost of food. Raising the limit from 185% of poverty limit to 300% will provide needed help to many families and individuals. Mahalo.

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 9:06:54 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Elizabeth Lamorte-Williams	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I humbly offer my testimony in favor of SB2135.

For survivors of domestic violence, ensuring their safety involves navigating numerous challenges, with financial stability being paramount among them. The ability to support themselves and their families economically is a critical factor when considering leaving an abusive partner. It's imperative to acknowledge the detrimental effects of financial abuse on survivors and to provide them with comprehensive support, including access to safety net programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

In Hawai'i, where the cost of living and food prices are high, survivors of domestic violence, alongside many low-income households, require assistance to afford food. SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp program, plays a crucial role in providing essential food support to some of the state's most economically vulnerable residents. However, the eligibility cutoff set at 200 percent of the poverty level creates a significant benefits cliff, wherein a household earning even a marginally higher income risks losing thousands of dollars in benefits annually.

I urge you to pass SB2135 to ensure that vital food security and economic support are accessible to working families and survivors alike.

Thank you for considering my testimony on this crucial issue.

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 9:07:35 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lindsey A Drayer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Survivors of domestic violence face many challenges when making decisions about their safety. One of the most crucial factors is their finances. The ability to provide for themselves and their families is a key economic consideration for survivors when deciding to leave an abusive partner. It's also important to recognize the impact that financial abuse can have on survivors and to support them in any way possible, including the ability to take full advantage of safety net programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).**

**Survivors of domestic violence are among the many low-income households that need help to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which a household earns an additional \$1 per month can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year.**

**Please pass SB2135, ensuring that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families and survivors.**

**Thank you**

**Lindsey Drayer**



**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 9:38:52 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Maddalynn Seseapasara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I respectfully submit testimony in support of SB2135.

Survivors of domestic violence face many challenges when making decisions about their safety. One of the most crucial factors is their finances. The ability to provide for themselves and their families is a key economic consideration for survivors when deciding to leave an abusive partner. It's also important to recognize the impact that financial abuse can have on survivors and to support them in any way possible, including the ability to take full advantage of safety net programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Survivors of domestic violence are among the many low-income households that need help to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which a household earns an additional \$1 per month can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year.

Please pass SB2135, ensuring that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families and survivors.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Maddalynn Seseapasara

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 2:06:04 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
RoAnn Viloría	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my support for SB 2135, a crucial initiative aimed at expanding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and ensuring continued funding for this essential program. As a concerned citizen deeply invested in addressing food insecurity, I urge you to consider the significant impact that SNAP has on the well-being of individuals and families across our state, including Hawai'i.

Expanding SNAP eligibility and securing adequate funding through SB 2135 is especially vital for states like Hawai'i, where high living costs and geographic isolation exacerbate food insecurity challenges. By providing additional resources for SNAP, we can help alleviate the burden on families struggling to afford nutritious food in Hawai'i and ensure that no one is left behind in our efforts to promote food security.

Moreover, investing in SNAP not only supports the health and well-being of individuals and families but also strengthens Hawaii's economy. Every dollar spent on SNAP generates economic activity within local communities, benefiting grocery stores, farmers, and food producers across the islands. By supporting SB 2135, we can bolster Hawaii's economy while simultaneously combating hunger and promoting food security for all residents.

In conclusion, SB 2135 presents a critical opportunity to address the pressing issue of food insecurity in Hawai'i and beyond. I urge you to prioritize the well-being of our communities by supporting this important legislation and ensuring that SNAP remains a reliable lifeline for those in need. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 1:09:37 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
mary drayer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

food security is vitally important - especially to our low income residents

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 3:47:31 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of SB2135. Thank you.

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 9:57:18 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Nanea Lo. I'm born and raised in the Hawaiian Kingdom. I live in Mō'ili'ili. I'm writing in STRONG SUPPORT of SB2135.

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Please pass this proposal, which will ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families.

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo, Mō'ili'ili, O'ahu

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 10:47:00 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai‘i's highest0in-the-nation cost of living. While the biggest cost to families is housing, Hawai‘i's high cost of food also takes a huge bite out of household budgets.

The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai‘i's most economically-disadvantaged residents. However, the 200% poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP (\$69,000 for a family of 4) leaves more than 145,000 ALICE households unable to achieve self-sufficiency, yet ineligible for any meaningful support to access food in the face of rising costs and stagnant wages.

Places like Washington, D.C. and Oregon are also considering creating state-funded programs to supplement the federal SNAP program to better serve and reach their ineligible, food insecure populations. The proposed expansion of SNAP eligibility to 300% of the FPL in Hawai‘i aligns with local values and reflects a commitment to addressing the unique economic challenges faced by Hawai‘i's people.

# Opportunity Youth Action Hawai‘i

February 12, 2024

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Hearing Time: 1:02 PM

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 225

Re: SB2135, RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

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

On behalf of the Opportunity Youth Action Hawai‘i hui, we are writing in **strong support** of SB2135, relating to the supplemental nutrition assistance program. This bill expands eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to include any individual or household whose monthly income is equal to or less than three hundred percent of the federal poverty level and appropriates necessary funds.

Increasing the funds and accessibility to the SNAP program is a strong step forward in assisting Hawaii’s low-income households. Additionally, by raising the SNAP benefits ceiling, Hawaii’s low-income families will be able to pursue additional income without the stresses of losing their lifeline for SNAP benefits.

Opportunity Youth Action Hawai‘i is a collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to reducing the harmful effects of a punitive incarceration system for youth; promoting equity in the justice system; and improving and increasing resources to address adolescent and young adult mental health needs. We seek to improve the continuity of programs and services for youth and young adults transitioning from minor to adult status; eliminate youth homelessness and housing market discrimination against young adults; and promote and fund more holistic and culturally informed approaches among public/private agencies serving youth.

**Please support SB2135.**





**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 12:17:06 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am in **STRONG SUPPORT** of SB2135. With our extremely high cost of living and increasingly expensive food prices, our 'ohana simply aren't making it here. They are leaving. We need to do whatever we can to expand the number of 'ohana eligible for resources here so that they can remain in the place they call home. Passing this bill will be a step in the right direction and provide food benefits formore keiki and their 'ohana who desperately need it.

Mahalo for your consideration.

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 12:20:04 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Please pass this proposal, which will ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families.

**LATE**

To: Hawaii State Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

Hearing Date/Time: Thursday February 12, 2024, 1:02pm

Place: Hawaii State Capitol, CR 225 & Videoconference

Re: Judith Ann Armstrong supports SB2135 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Dear Chair Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Senator Henry J. C. Aquino and members of the Committee on Health & Human Services

I, Judith Ann Armstrong, support SB2135.

This bill will update the eligibility formula for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to better reflect the cost of living in Hawaii.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of S2135.

Sincerely,

Judith Ann Armstrong

**LATE**

**Testimony: Strong support for SB 2135 - RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 2135, which addresses the critical issue of food security and the SNAP benefits cliff in Hawai'i.

Many low-income households in our state face significant challenges in affording food, exacerbated by the high cost of living and food prices. SNAP plays a vital role in providing essential food assistance to some of our most economically disadvantaged residents.

However, the current 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP creates a steep benefits cliff. Even a marginal increase in income can result in the loss of thousands of dollars' worth of benefits annually for households, creating a disincentive for individuals to pursue economic opportunities.

Passing SB 2135 is crucial to ensuring that working families have access to both essential food security and economic opportunities. By addressing the benefits cliff, this proposal will help alleviate the financial strain faced by many households and promote stability and well-being in our communities.

I urge you to support SB 2135 and take action to strengthen food security for Hawai'i residents.

Thank you for scheduling this important measure.

Laura Acasio, District 1

**LATE**

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 11:48:25 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shana Wailana Kukila	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: SB2135 Relating to SNAP Benefits

POSITION: Full Support

This is important for the Maui wildfire victims as well as our growing A.L.I.C.E. populations.

Mahalo,

Shana W. Kukila

Hilo, HI

**LATE**

**SB-2135**

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:24:09 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Linda Wakatake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I stongly support SB2135

Many low-income households struggle to purchase food due to Hawai'i's high cost of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to some of Hawai'i's most economically disadvantaged residents. Yet, the 200 percent poverty level eligibility cutoff for SNAP assistance creates an extreme benefits cliff in which an additional \$1 per month earned by a household can result in thousands of dollars' worth of lost benefits each year. Please pass this proposal, which will ensure that vital food security and economic opportunities are available to working families.

Mahalo,

Linda Wakatake