
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that, despite rising food
2 costs, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
3 benefit levels for households in the State have been phasing
4 downward since federal fiscal year 2024 due to incomplete and
5 flawed cost analysis methodology. According to Aloha United
6 Way, in 2022, forty-four per cent of the households in Hawaii
7 earned below the asset limited, income constrained, employed
8 (ALICE) household survival budget or the minimum costs of
9 household necessities plus taxes, adjusted for different
10 counties and household types. According to a study by the
11 Hawaii Foodbank, the State's largest hunger relief organization,
12 nearly one in three Hawaii households were food insecure in
13 2023. The legislature notes that Hawaii is the only state to
14 see reductions in federal SNAP benefits, while all other states
15 and territories have had SNAP increases over the past two years.
16 Currently 98,440 Hawaii families participate in SNAP.



1 The legislature further notes that although the Hawaii
2 congressional delegation is working to find a solution, federal
3 changes are very slow. Families receiving SNAP benefits
4 typically utilize the full monthly allocation. A SNAP-eligible
5 family of four in Hawaii earns less than \$3,887 per month.
6 These recent cuts in benefit levels require families to divert
7 \$72 or more of their earnings to food expenses, further reducing
8 their ability to pay for childcare, housing, utilities, and
9 other essentials. The recent cuts also exacerbate food
10 insecurity and reduce spending at local food retailers,
11 including programs like the Hawaii healthy food incentive
12 program, now commonly known as the DA BUX double up food bucks
13 program, that incentivize the purchase of locally grown produce.
14 Since SNAP funds are spent locally, supplementing federal
15 funding with state resources would benefit both vulnerable
16 families and Hawaii's agricultural economy and would help
17 establish a back stop for SNAP recipients in the event there are
18 drastic federal SNAP cuts.

19 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to address the
20 immediate needs of food-insecure families and support Hawaii's



1 local food system and economy by establishing the Hawaii food
2 security special fund.

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
4 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
5 and to read as follows:

6 "§346- Hawaii food security special fund; establishment.

7 (a) There is established within the state treasury the Hawaii
8 food security special fund, into which shall be deposited:

9 (1) Appropriations from the legislature;

10 (2) Moneys directed to the special fund from any other
11 sources, including but not limited to grants, gifts,
12 and awards; and

13 (3) Moneys derived from interest, dividend, or other
14 income from the above sources.

15 (b) Moneys in the Hawaii food security special fund shall
16 be administered and distributed by the department via the
17 electronic benefit transfer system to supplement existing
18 monthly federal benefits to eligible SNAP households in the
19 State to provide the same level of benefits as those available
20 in federal fiscal year 2023; provided that the amount of monthly



1 federal benefits to a qualifying household does not exceed the
2 level of benefits provided in federal fiscal year 2023.

3 (c) The department shall prepare and submit an annual
4 report on the status of the Hawaii food security special fund to
5 the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening
6 of each regular session."

7 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
9 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
10 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
11 year 2026-2027 to be deposited into the Hawaii food security
12 special fund established pursuant to section 346- , Hawaii
13 Revised Statutes.

14 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the Hawaii food
15 security special fund the sum of \$ or so much thereof
16 as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the same sum
17 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027
18 for the purposes of this Act.

19 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
20 of human services for the purposes of this Act.

21 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.



H.B. NO. 704

1 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

2

INTRODUCED BY: _____

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JAN 17 2025



H.B. NO. 704

Report Title:

Kupuna Caucus; Department of Human Services; SNAP; Hawaii Food Security Special Fund; Reports; Appropriations

Description:

Establishes the Hawaii Food Security Special Fund to restore Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefit levels to those provided in federal fiscal year 2023. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

