

JAN 17 2025

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 the consumption of
2 fresh fruits and vegetables is an integral part of building a
3 healthy and thriving local food system for Hawaii. The
4 legislature further finds that between eighty-five and ninety
5 per cent of the State's food supply is imported and Hawaii's
6 farmers face significant barriers to growth in local food
7 supply.

8 The legislature further finds that according to a report
9 issued in 2023, thirty per cent of households in the State are
10 considered food insecure. Considering the effect of food
11 insecurity on people's health, this translates to over
12 \$800,000,000 in added annual health care costs for the State.
13 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflation, households
14 are also facing increasing food costs. Compared to the rest of
15 the nation, households in the State spend one of the highest
16 percentages of their annual budgets on food.



1 Additionally, the emergency allotments added to the federal
2 supplemental nutrition assistance program during the COVID-19
3 pandemic expired in March 2023. This resulted in a statewide
4 decrease of \$17,000,000 in federal food benefits per month for
5 more than eighty thousand households. With the loss in food
6 money payments, supplemental nutrition assistance program
7 participants will benefit from the State's commitment to other
8 food assistance programs, such as the Hawaii's double up bucks
9 program discussed below.

10 The legislature further finds that, through the Gus
11 Schumacher nutrition incentive program administered by the
12 United States Department of Agriculture, Hawaii has the
13 opportunity to accelerate the growth of local food production
14 for the State while addressing food insecurity for low-income
15 residents who are eligible for supplemental nutrition assistance
16 program benefits. Currently implemented in more than thirty
17 states, the Gus Schumacher nutrition incentive program provides
18 matching federal grant moneys to state programs that incentivize
19 the use of supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits
20 for the purchase of fresh produce. These federal matching funds



1 increase access to healthy dietary options while also
2 invigorating local economies and addressing food insecurity.

3 The legislature additionally finds that Hawaii's double up
4 food bucks program began with an initial pilot program in 2012
5 by Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services on the
6 island of Oahu and The Kohala Center on the island of Hawaii.
7 Act 153, Session Laws of Hawaii 2019, created the Hawaii healthy
8 food incentive program, and in tandem with a federal Gus
9 Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program grant award, united the
10 double up food bucks programs statewide under one name, DA BUX
11 double up food bucks. This program provides a dollar-for-dollar
12 match to supplemental nutrition assistance program beneficiaries
13 who purchase Hawaii grown fruits and vegetables at participating
14 supplemental nutrition assistance program food retailers. As of
15 2023, the program was available at close to sixty food retailers
16 across over one hundred market sites and pick-up locations,
17 including grocery stores, farmers' markets, community-supported
18 agriculture programs, and other farm direct food hubs.

19 DA BUX is referred to as a triple win for the State, as it
20 provides support for local families, local farmers, and the
21 local economy. From 2020 to 2021, DA BUX supported four hundred



1 seventy farm producers and eight distributors. Each dollar
2 reimbursed to participating DA BUX food retailers for their
3 issued discounts on local produce has an economic multiplier of
4 2.1. This means that each program dollar issued for local
5 produce incentives contributes \$2.10 to Hawaii's economy.
6 Additional funding will allow the statewide program
7 administrator, led by The Food Basket Inc., Hawaii island's food
8 bank in partnership with the Hawaii Good Food Alliance, to
9 obtain matching federal funds for continued support of the
10 program. For example, a \$3,000,000 investment by the State in
11 this program would allow for a federal funding match that will
12 contribute at least \$12,000,000 to the local economy annually.
13 This result is a triple win for the State because it supports
14 families, farmers, and the local economy.

15 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
16 funds to the department of agriculture for the continued
17 administration of the Hawaii healthy food incentive program and
18 to provide matching funds to beneficiaries who participate in
19 the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

20 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
21 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so



1 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
2 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
3 year 2026-2027 for the continued administration of the Hawaii
4 healthy food incentive program and to provide matching funds to
5 beneficiaries who participate in the supplemental nutrition
6 assistance program.

7 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
8 of agriculture for the purposes of this Act.

9 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY: 



S.B. NO. 689

Report Title:

DOA; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Hawaii Healthy Food Incentive Program; DA BUX; Appropriations

Description:

Appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture for the continued administration of the Hawaii Healthy Food Incentive Program and to provide matching funds to beneficiaries who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

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