

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

646

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 14 2025

RE: S.B. No. 961
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Health and Human Services, to which was referred S.B. No. 961 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to require the Department of Human Services to:

- (1) Adjust the minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit households;
- (2) Participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP); and
- (3) Report to the Legislature.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from one member of the Hawai'i County Council, Hawaii Food Industry Association; AlohaCare; Hawai'i Public Health Institute; AARP Hawai'i; Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice; Hawai'i Primary Care Association; Hawaii Food Bank, Inc.; Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition; Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action; Hawaii Farmers Union United; Democratic Party of Hawai'i; AAUW of Hawaii; Green Party of Hawai'i; Strata Farms LLC; Chamber of



Sustainable Commerce; Hawai'i Hunger Action Network; Catholic Charities Hawai'i; and twenty-eight individuals.

Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Human Services.

Your Committee finds that increasing access to nutritious meals will improve overall health and decrease adverse health outcomes for the State's keiki and kupuna. Your Committee further finds that the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture oversees SNAP which provides monthly funds to eligible low-income households to purchase food. The duration of the SNAP benefits, known as the certification period, can range from one to thirty-six months, and states are given the option to extend the certification period for SNAP households with members who are aged sixty years or older from twelve months to twenty-four months without a waiver. Your Committee further finds that ESAP is a project under SNAP that seeks to increase program participation among the low-income population aged sixty years or older by streamlining the application and certification process. This measure will allow SNAP families and kupuna to gain stable access to nutritious meals by requiring the Department of Human Services to set the minimum SNAP certification period for households with members who are sixty years of age or older to twenty-four months and to participate in ESAP and set the minimum SNAP certification period for other households to twelve months.

Your Committee acknowledges the concerns raised in testimony by the Department of Human Services that the anticipated increase in the number of SNAP households pursuant to this measure would overburden the Department's current SNAP eligibility determination system and workforce, leading to a potential increase in payment issuance errors. Your Committee also notes that the Department is planning on implementing a new SNAP eligibility system in the fall of 2026 that will enable the Department to handle the potential increase in SNAP households. Therefore, amendments to this measure are necessary to allow the Department of Human Services to finish updating their SNAP eligibility system.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2027, to allow the Department of Human Services to complete the

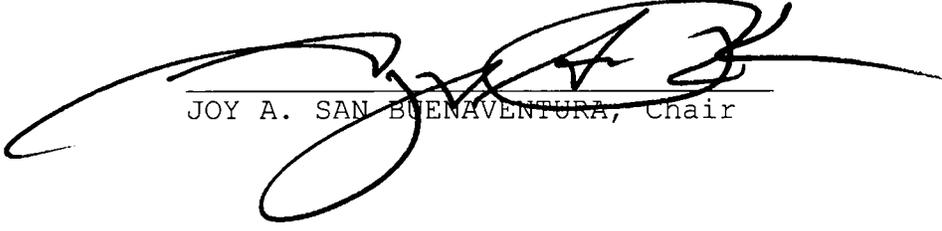


implementation of its new eligibility system for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and

- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Health and Human Services that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 961, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 961, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Health and Human
Services,



JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, Chair



