

JAN 17 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that many low-income
2 households struggle to purchase food due to Hawaii's high cost
3 of living and food prices. The supplemental nutrition
4 assistance program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp
5 program, is crucial to providing necessary food assistance to
6 some of Hawaii's most economically disadvantaged residents.

7 The legislature further finds that SNAP is the most
8 effective anti-hunger initiative in the country. In Hawaii,
9 SNAP supports over one hundred thirty thousand individuals,
10 bringing more than \$630,000,000 into the State's economy each
11 year. These benefits help economically vulnerable households
12 meet their basic nutritional needs without sacrificing their
13 financial security.

14 The legislature additionally finds that a study co-authored
15 by the university of Hawaii economic research organization and
16 Hawaii Public Health Institute found that eliminating the net
17 income limit criteria for SNAP beneficiaries would provide an



1 additional \$45,000,000 in benefits to struggling families
2 across the State and expand eligibility for thirteen thousand to
3 fourteen thousand more households, with each household receiving
4 an average of \$3,200 annually in food assistance. Subsequently,
5 in September 2024, Governor Josh Green announced that the State
6 would remove the net income limit criteria to strengthen
7 Hawaii's social welfare system for working-class families.

8 The legislature also finds that SNAP access and
9 participation rates are hampered by understaffing at the
10 department of human services. Improvements to SNAP in the
11 State, including elimination of the net income limit, will only
12 be effective if they are able to be fully implemented, which
13 will require additional staffing for the department of human
14 services. Moreover, since SNAP benefits are federally
15 reimbursable, increasing staff for the State's SNAP program
16 could generate hundreds of millions of dollars in federal
17 revenue to combat food insecurity in local communities by
18 strengthening the State's SNAP participation rate.

19 The legislature also finds that the State does not
20 participate in the elderly simplified application project, which
21 is a demonstration project that seeks to increase participation



1 among the older adult low-income population facing barriers to
2 participation in SNAP. Specifically, the demonstration project
3 waives the recertification interview requirement, allows for
4 greater flexibility in verification, and extends the
5 certification period to thirty-six months.

6 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 7 (1) Require the department of human services to adjust the
8 minimum certification periods for supplemental
9 nutrition assistance program benefits households,
10 participate in the elderly simplified application
11 project, and report to the legislature; and
12 (2) Appropriate funds to the department of human services
13 to enhance staffing related to the supplemental
14 nutrition assistance program.

15 SECTION 2. (a) The department of human services shall set
16 the minimum certification periods for supplemental nutrition
17 assistance program benefit households to twelve months; provided
18 that for households in which all adult members are sixty years
19 of age or older, the certification periods shall be at minimum
20 twenty-four months.



1 (b) The department of human services shall participate in
2 the elderly simplified application project of the supplemental
3 nutrition assistance program to simplify eligibility
4 determinations for eligible households. Participation in the
5 elderly simplified application project shall include:

6 (1) Establishing recertification periods of a least
7 thirty-six months for households composed entirely of
8 adults sixty years of age or older or adults with
9 disabilities; and

10 (2) Waiving the recertification interview for eligible
11 households, to the extent allowed by federal law.

12 (c) The department of human services shall seek any
13 necessary federal approvals or waivers to implement the
14 provisions of this section and shall promptly amend its rules,
15 policies, and procedures to effectuate the intent of this
16 section.

17 (d) The department of human services shall submit a report
18 of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed
19 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior
20 to the convening of the regular sessions of 2026 and 2027 that
21 shall include:



- (1) Data on the implementation and utilization of the supplemental nutrition assistance program and elderly simplified application project, including the number and characteristics of participating households;
- (2) Administrative cost savings or changes; and
- (3) Analysis of the participation rates.

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to strengthen access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program by:

- (1) Authorizing differential pay increases for positions related to the facilitation of the supplemental nutrition assistance program;
- (2) Establishing new positions to improve access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program, particularly for economically disadvantaged communities; and
- (3) Undertaking any other programs or initiatives the department of human services deems effective in



1 improving supplemental nutrition assistance program
2 participation rates.

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

5 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY:

Karl Rhoads



S.B. NO. 1055

Report Title:

DHS; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Elderly
Simplified Application Project; Report; Appropriation

Description:

Requires the Department of Human Services to adjust the minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits households, participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project, and report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program rates, including establishing additional positions.

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