

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
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DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

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'OKELE

February 24, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative Chris Todd, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1518 HD1 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

Hearing: February 26, 2026, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this bill and provides the following comments.

By 1/1/2028, this bill requires DHS, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release and allowing individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

The Department recently partnered with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) to pilot a pre-release application process. Individuals scheduled for release will be assisted by DCR staff to complete a SNAP application, which will be routed to a Department point of contact once the individual's release date is finalized. This pilot is with two DCR facilities on Oahu.

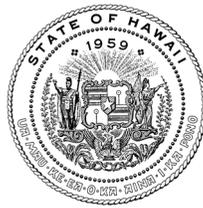
The Department will use lessons learned from this pilot to determine how and when to expand this to additional DCR facilities and whether a waiver would further enhance the

services provided and be pursued. Additionally, information gained through this pilot will inform the Department of any additional resources needed for the new system and SNAP operations to better support a pre-release application. Respectfully, the proposed statutory framework may be pre-mature.

The Department appreciates the measure's acknowledgment (page 2, line 13) of the current process to update its Benefits Eligibility Solution (BES) system, automate tasks, expand its ability to address the needs of benefit program recipients, and consider the time required to fully implement the system statewide. We presently are schedule to begin the piloting BES in October 2026 with a statewide rollout in February 2027.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
AND REHABILITATION**
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalu Kalaima
a Ho'oponopono Ola*
1177 Alakea Street
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TOMMY JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

Melanie Martin
Deputy Director
Administration

Vacant
Deputy Director
Correctional Institutions

Sanna Muñoz
Deputy Director
Rehabilitation Services
and
Programs

No. _____

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1518, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

by

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

House Committee on Finance
Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 26, 2026; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Via Video Conference

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1518, House Draft (HD) 1, which requires the Department of Human Services (DHS), upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release. It further allows individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits.

As part of DCR's ongoing efforts to increase reach in wrap around reentry services, we have started a pilot program with DHS at two (2) of our facilities (Waiawa Correctional Facility and Women's Community Correctional Center) to assist exiting inmates apply for SNAP benefits prior to their release. When inmates are engaged with services prior to their exit from correctional facilities, it increases their chances of successful reintegration into our communities and reduces recidivism.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of HB 1518, HD 1.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1518 HD1
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka ‘Oihana ‘Imi Kālā
(House Committee on Finance)
Hawai‘i State Capitol

Pepeluāli 26, 2026

2:00 PM

Lumi 308

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, a me Members of Ke Kōmike Hale o ka ‘Oihana ‘Imi Kālā:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB1518 HD 1** which requires the Department of Human Services to seek a federal waiver to implement a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for individuals nearing release from incarceration and removes the treatment-based restriction on SNAP eligibility for individuals with felony drug convictions.

Food security is a foundational component of successful reentry and long-term stability for pa‘ahao. Individuals leaving incarceration face significant barriers in the immediate period following release, including limited access to income, housing, transportation, and necessities. Federal guidance recognizes that ensuring access to nutrition assistance at the point of reentry reduces the risk of food insecurity, promotes public health, and supports community reintegration. Pre-release SNAP enrollment is a proven, evidence-based strategy to reduce gaps in benefits and mitigate the destabilizing effects of release.

Native Hawaiians are disproportionately impacted by incarceration and the collateral consequences that follow.¹ Structural inequities including poverty, housing instability, and limited access to services compound the challenges faced by formerly incarcerated individuals, increasing the risk of recidivism. Restricting access to basic food assistance based on conviction history or treatment availability perpetuates these inequities and undermines rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

This bill aligns Hawai‘i with the flexibility permitted under federal law and with the approach taken by many states that have eliminated or reduced SNAP restrictions tied to

¹ Office of Hawaiian Affairs, *The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System* 10 (2010), available at http://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ir_final_web_rev.pdf

felony drug convictions.² Conditioning access to food assistance on treatment participation or availability creates barriers that are unrelated to nutrition need and disproportionately affect individuals in communities where treatment access is limited. Access to food should not be contingent on program capacity or geography.

The bill also thoughtfully accounts for administrative readiness by directing DHS to seek a federal waiver and implement the pre-release SNAP process by January 1, 2028, allowing time for systems upgrades and coordinated planning. This approach balances equity, public health, and operational feasibility. This bill represents a critical step toward reducing recidivism, improving food security, and supporting the dignity and stability of individuals reentering the community. By ensuring access to SNAP at the point of release and removing unnecessary eligibility barriers, this measure advances more effective, humane, and equitable social service policy. For these reasons, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs respectfully urges this Committee to **PASS HB1518 HD1**.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.

² Collateral Consequences Resource Center, *National SNAP/TANF Drug Felony Study* (Dec. 5, 2023), <https://ccresourcecenter.org/national-snap-tanf-drug-felony-study/>



Hawai'i

Committee: Finance
Hearing Date/Time: Thursday, February 26, 2026, at 2:00pm
Place: Conference Room 308 & Via Videoconference
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of HB1518 HD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

Dear Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i (ACLU-HI) supports HB1518 HD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) by 1/1/2028 upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. It also allows all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Current federal law prohibits individuals convicted for a felony for possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance. However, federal law also allows for states to opt out of this disqualification and Hawai'i has reduced this restriction to allow those individuals to receive benefits after they have completed their sentences or treatment, or who are complying with a treatment program.

Today, 13 states have waived this requirement entirely. Hawai'i should join them.

We know that people entering prison are “more likely than the general population to have experienced poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and poor health.”¹ The same is likely true when they reach the end of their terms and return to their communities.

Like permanent housing and permanent employment, food security is an essential part of financial stability and lends to reduced recidivism rates.² Prisoners at the end of their sentences often need assistance with reentry and it behooves us to ensure they are provided with all the tools necessary to succeed at their post-incarceration lives.

¹ National Research Council, *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences*, National Academies Press, 2014, <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/18613/the-growth-of-incarceration-in-the-united-states-exploring-causes>.

² Prior incarceration and food insecurity trajectories through older adulthood: findings from the Health and Retirement Study. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 2025 Nov. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40707238/>.

SNAP can be a key part of reentry support infrastructure. By allowing the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and DHS to coordinate to ensure a prisoner has access to SNAP benefits on day one of their release is an essential and relatively low hanging tool the state can employ. “Early access to fundamental supports, such as food, may mitigate the risk of rearrest or reincarceration.”³

Hawai‘i is in the process of implementing a Section 1115 Waiver, which allows for prisoners nearing the end of their sentences to apply for Medicaid coverage. While DHS works to comply with the requirements of this waiver, we understand that the department is also in the process of completing upgrades to its benefits eligibility processes and technology.

Acknowledging these ongoing efforts, the bill has an effective date of January 1, 2028, which give the department ample time to complete those upgrades.

We urge the committee to advance this legislation and help our incarcerated individuals as they return to their families and reenter their communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

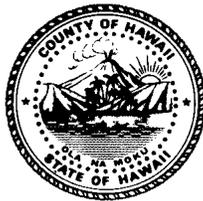
Mahalo,
Josh Frost
Josh Frost
Policy Assistant
ACLU of Hawai‘i
jfrost@acluhawaii.org

The mission of the ACLU of Hawai‘i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawai‘i fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawai‘i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization founded in 1965 that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds.

³ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, How SNAP Can Better Serve the Formerly Incarcerated, 2018, https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/how-snap-can-better-serve-the-formerlyincarcerated#_ftn6.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor

William V. Brilhante, Jr.
Managing Director



Benson Medina
Director

Dennis Lin
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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February 24, 2026
HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Thursday, February 26, 2026
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308

TESTIMONY ON HB 1518 HD1: Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee,

I am Benson Medina, Director of the Department of Research and Development, County of Hawai'i. One of the agricultural objectives of this department is to support collaboration, innovation, resource development, and programmatic sustainability throughout the food system to increase access to locally produced food among low-income residents.

The County of Hawai'i provides written testimony in **SUPPORT of HB1518 HD1** to require the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release and allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

These changes increase SNAP eligibility and access for many in our community. Hawai'i County faces the highest rates of food insecurity in the State, with 43% of Hawai'i County households reporting food insecurity (Hawai'i Foodbank, 2025). When comparing levels of food insecurity found among people released from prison to the general public, formerly incarcerated people fare far worse – studies show food insecurity among formerly incarcerated people in the U.S. to range from 70%-91% ([CLASP, 2022](#)). A pre-release program providing immediate SNAP access will address food insecurity and support successful reintegration. Eliminating the drug felony ban will allow our residents to receive the benefits they deserve.

SNAP is a critical part of a reentry support infrastructure, providing basic food assistance and supplementing inadequate income. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of HB1518 HD1**.

Respectfully,

Benson Medina
Director



To: Committee on Finance

Hearing Date/Time: Thursday February 26, 2026 2:00 PM

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 1518 HD1

From: Heather Lusk, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi,

The Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) **supports HB 1518 HD1** which would allow people who are incarcerated to apply for SNAP so that it is active when they are released.

HHHRC's mission is to *reduce harm, promote health, create wellness and fight stigma in Hawaii and the Pacific*. We focus our efforts on those disproportionately affected by social determinants of health, including but not limited to: people living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the transgender, LGBTQ and the Native Hawaiian communities.

HHHRC works at the intersection of food insecurity, homelessness, chronic disease, behavioral health and the legal system – and this bill will support people who are re-entering the community with the resources they need to thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Heather Lusk, Executive Director, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center



Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: House Committee on Finance
Re: **HB1518 HD1– Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**
Hawaii State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 26, 2026, 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB1518 HD1**, which would require the Department of Humans Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish by 1/1/2028 a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates as well as allow individuals convicted of an offense involving a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Food insecurity after incarceration is widespread and severe. More than 90% of recently released individuals experience food insecurity, and many report going days without eating. This instability increases the risk of homelessness and reincarceration.

By allowing inmates to apply for SNAP before release, this bill would close a critical hunger gap during reentry. It would ensure that they can access food immediately—rather than waiting weeks or months for SNAP benefits while trying to rebuild their lives.

Pre-release SNAP application programs are a proven, evidence-based solution. Thirteen states have already implemented SNAP pre-release waivers successfully, demonstrating that this approach works. In addition, reliable access to food reduces emergency service use, homelessness, and recidivism—helping people succeed while lowering public costs.

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

Thank you,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MARK PATTERSON
CHAIR

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OVERSIGHT COORDINATOR

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STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OVERSIGHT COMMISSION
E HUIKALA A MA'EMA'E NO
235 S. Beretania Street, 16th Floor
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
(808) 587-4160

TO: The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Mark Patterson, Chair
Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission

SUBJECT: House Bill 1518, House Draft 1, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Hearing: Thursday, February 26, 2026; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 308

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC) **supports** House Bill 1518, House Draft 1, relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which requires the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for individuals nearing release.

One of the most consistent findings in reentry research is that access to basic necessities like food, housing, and income reduces the likelihood of recidivism. Individuals leaving correctional facilities face an immediate period of vulnerability, often with limited financial resources, unstable housing, and barriers to employment. Ensuring timely access to SNAP benefits at the point of release provides a critical stabilizing resource that supports lawful reintegration and reduces the pressure to return to survival-based criminal activity.

When returning citizens are able to meet their basic needs, they are more likely to comply with supervision conditions, engage in treatment or employment programs, and maintain stable family connections. This bill strengthens the reentry pipeline by allowing individuals to begin SNAP eligibility processing before release, eliminating unnecessary gaps in support during a high-risk transition period.

HB1518 also corrects an outdated policy that restricts SNAP eligibility based on drug convictions, even when individuals have completed their sentence. Restoring access to nutritional assistance promotes fairness, reintegration, and health outcomes, while aligning Hawai'i with evidence-based reentry best practices.

Finally, this measure leverages an existing federal USDA SNAP waiver framework, allowing Hawai'i to draw down federal funds rather than relying solely on state resources. By improving post-release stability and reducing reincarceration, HB1518 has the potential to lower long-term correctional costs, making it both a humane and fiscally prudent investment.

Should you have additional questions, the Oversight Coordinator, Christin Johnson, can be reached at 808-849-3580 or at christin.m.johnson@hawaii.gov. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



HIPHI Board

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Department of Pediatrics

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Danette Wong Tomiyasu, MBA
Retired, Hawai'i State Department of
Health

HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &
Evaluation

Community Health
Worker Initiatives

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Hawai'i Climate Change and Health
Working Group

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Immunization Coalition

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 24, 2026

To: Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

Re: Support for HB 1518 HD1, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Hrg: February 26, 2026 at 2:00 PM in Conference Room 308

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating, Active Living² (HEAL) coalition **supports HB 1518 HD1**, relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which by 1/1/2028, requires the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release; and allows all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefit, regardless of treatment status.

Anti-Hunger Lifeline

SNAP is one of the most effective anti-hunger tools available. In 2025, the program provided nutrition assistance to roughly 85,000 households and over 160,000 individuals per month in our state, delivering an average benefit of over \$360 per person.

Benefits Begin Upon Release

This proposal would allow Hawai'i to seek federal approval to provide SNAP benefits prior to an inmate's release from incarceration. This way, they can start receiving benefits immediately after release, rather than waiting to apply after release. This policy is a proven, evidence-based strategy to support reentry success and reduce recidivism rates by ensuring former inmates have access to food security.

Formerly Incarcerated Face Extreme Rates of Food Insecurity

Incarceration and hunger are deeply linked. More than 3,700 people are incarcerated in our state's corrections system, including a disproportionate

¹ Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

² 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.



number of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.³ People returning from incarceration often face extreme economic instability, making food insecurity a destabilizing challenge to overcome in the path to reintegration.

Research shows that formerly incarcerated people experience significantly higher rates of food insecurity than the general population, which is associated with poor health outcomes and increased risk of recidivism. Individuals with a history of incarceration have significantly higher odds of chronic or persistent food insecurity across adulthood.⁴ 91% of individuals recently released from prison reported food insecurity, and more than one-third reported going an entire day without eating because they could not afford food.⁵

Proven Successes

Currently, 13 states have adopted SNAP pre-release waivers to ensure benefits are available immediately upon release.⁶ Supporting basic needs during reentry helps people successfully reintegrate into the community, ultimately reducing taxpayer costs associated with emergency services and reincarceration. Giving eligible individuals benefits immediately upon being released, rather than weeks or months later, reduces a critical gap in access to food during reentry, a period associated with elevated mortality, homelessness, and reincarceration risk.⁷

Food security is essential in strengthening our state's efforts to establish a restorative model of offender reintegration. HIPHI urges your committee to support this bill.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kris Coffield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kris Coffield
Policy and Advocacy Associate

³ Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Weekly Population Report, January 26, 2026

⁴ "Prior incarceration and food insecurity trajectories through older adulthood: findings from the Health and Retirement Study", *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, November 2025

⁵ "A pilot study examining food insecurity and HIV risk behaviors among individuals recently released from prison" *AIDS education and prevention*, April 2013

⁶ State Options Report 17th Edition, USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2025

⁷ "Homelessness Following Jail Exit Among Previously Housed Individuals", *Journal of Urban Health*, October 2025



Date of Hearing: 26 February, 2026

To: Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and the House Committee on Finance

Subject: **HB 1518 HD1**, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Aloha,

I am writing in **strong support of HB 1518 HD1**. This measure will strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals by establishing a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process. The bill requires coordination with correctional facilities to identify eligible individuals prior to release, facilitates the completion and submission of SNAP applications so benefits are available immediately after release, and provides education and counseling to individuals transferring back into the community. Importantly, the bill will comply with all federal SNAP regulations and removes unnecessary barriers that prevent individuals with controlled substance convictions from enrolling in SNAP.

The State of Hawai'i has one of the highest recidivism rates in the nation, with more than fifty per cent of formerly incarcerated individuals returning to the correctional system. By strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community, these high recidivism rates can be reduced. In addition, by providing SNAP benefits to all individuals regardless of past felony drug-related convictions, Hawai'i would join the twenty-eight other states and the District of Columbia¹ that provide basic food assistance without this restriction.

Food is a basic human need and a foundation for public safety, health, and economic stability. By improving access to nutrition for individuals reentering society, this bill protects some of Hawai'i's most vulnerable residents while strengthening our communities as a whole.

For these reasons, I respectfully **urge the committee to pass HB 1518 HD1**.

Mahalo,
Brandon Kinard & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

[1] Gunen, B., & Klassen, A. C. (2025). "A life sentence of hunger": News coverage of state-level PRWORA SNAP restrictions for persons convicted of drug felonies. *Health Affairs Scholar*, 3(5), qxaf087. <https://doi.org/10.1093/haschl/qxaf087>

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2026, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



HB1518 HD1 SNAP for Offender Reentry FIN

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Thursday, Feb 26, 2026: 2:00: Room 308 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB1518 HD1:

ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the ad hoc leader of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder prevention and treatment agencies and recovery-oriented services.

As a treatment provider working directly with individuals impacted by substance use disorders, we see firsthand how access to basic needs—especially food—plays a critical role in recovery and successful reentry.

Food insecurity is a major barrier to recovery.

Some people enter Substance Use Disorder (SUD) **treatment immediately upon release to receive the support** they need to be successful in their return back into their community.

However, several persons don't elect to start SUD treatment, in which case they return to community with no income, unstable housing, and limited support. With unmet basic needs, people experience increased stress, medical instability, and higher risk of relapse.

DCR staff can help the justice-involved to complete their SNAP

applications and process the forms correctly to be available immediately upon reentry to avoid probably crisis. By **adding motivational aspects**, this process would reduce gaps, encourage justice-involved to seek care for their SUD medical condition thus strengthening coordination between correctional systems, human services, and community-based SUD treatment providers.

Providing access to SNAP benefits at the point of release helps persons to stabilize, in which case they are more likely to access treatment shortly after release from incarceration. Then treatment can help them focus on learning coping skills, employment readiness, and compliance with supervision requirements rather than daily survival.

When individuals have **access to food, housing support, and SUD treatment** services, they are **more likely to remain engaged in care and less likely to return to incarceration**. Supporting nutrition during reentry is a proven public health intervention that reduces relapse, overdose risk, and recidivism.

We respectfully urge the committee to support this bill and take an important step toward improving recovery, stability, and public safety across our state.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available to answer questions.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

P.O. Box 37158, Honolulu, HI 96837-0158

Phone/E-Mail: [\(808\) 927-1214](tel:(808)927-1214) / kat.caphi@gmail.com

Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor



COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Chris Todd, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 26, 2026

2:00 pm

Room 309 and VIDEOCONFERENCE

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB 1518 HD1 - DHS SNAP PROGRAM BENEFITS FOR THE INCARCERATED PERSONS NEAR RELEASE

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai`i for almost three decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 3,669 Hawai`i individuals living behind bars¹ and under the "care and custody" of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation on February 16, 2026. We are always mindful that 797 of Hawai`i's imprisoned male population are serving their sentences abroad -- thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

I'm sorry that I cannot attend this hearing as I have a doctor's appointment.

Community Alliance on Prisons appreciates the opportunity to express our **strong support for HB 1518 HD1** that requires the Department of Human Services by 1/1/2028, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing

¹ DCR Weekly Population Report, February 16, 2026

[Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-02-16.pdf](#)

release. It allows all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

This bill strengthens Hawai‘i’s safety net by enabling pre-release SNAP applications and removing unnecessary barriers tied to past convictions. Ensuring people have access to food immediately upon release reduces recidivism, supports successful reentry, and helps individuals and families stabilize during critical transition periods.

When returning citizens are able to meet their basic needs, they are more likely to comply with supervision conditions, engage in treatment or employment programs, and maintain stable family connections. **This bill strengthens the reentry pipeline** by allowing individuals to begin SNAP eligibility processing before release, eliminating unnecessary gaps in support during a high-risk transition period.

A publication by the Federal Interagency Reentry Council called “Reentry Myth Busters”² contains the following information:

MYTH: Individuals convicted of a felony can never receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) benefits.

FACT: This ban applies only to convicted drug felons, and only thirteen States have kept the ban in place in its entirety. Most States have modified or eliminated the ban.

The following 18 States and the District of Columbia have eliminated the ban entirely: Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming.

The following 19 States have amended the ban to allow some individuals to regain eligibility by meeting certain additional requirements, like receiving or completing drug or alcohol treatment: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, **Hawaii**, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin.

HB 1518 HD1 would move Hawai‘i to the 19th state that has eliminated the ban! This bill strengthens Hawai‘i’s safety net by enabling pre-release SNAP applications and removing unnecessary barriers tied to past convictions. Ensuring people have access

² **Reentry Myth Busters**

https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/reentryMythBuster_snapBenefits.pdf

to food immediately upon release reduces recidivism, supports successful reentry, and helps individuals and families stabilize during critical transition periods.

This is crucial since so many people exiting incarceration are indigent and have no resources to take care of themselves or their families. This puts their successful reentry and the entire community at risk. As Bob Marley has said, "A hungry man is an angry man."

Let's demonstrate that the name change from the Department of Public Safety to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is meaningful and not just cosmetic. Every incarcerated person is a member of our community and we must do better to help them reintegrate with their families and communities for the greater good of everyone in Hawai'i nei.

We hope that this committee sees the benefits of assisting people who may have lost their way by shining a light of caring and concern to encourage them to be pro-social, contributing members of the larger Hawai'i community by passing HB 1518 HD1! Mahalo for this opportunity to share our mana`o.



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for HB 1518 – Relating to SNAP
House Committee on Public Safety
Thursday, February 26, 2026, at 2:00PM

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **HB 1518**, which would require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release.

SNAP is a critical lifeline for more than 160,000 Hawai‘i residents, supporting working families, individuals with disabilities, and others living on fixed or limited incomes.¹ Without it, many of these individuals would not have any money to pay for food at all. Additionally, 1 in 3 Hawai‘i residents remain food insecure, struggling with the state’s continued high cost of living.²

The changes proposed in **HB 1518** will help SNAP reach more Hawai‘i residents by allowing incarcerated individuals to apply before release, ensuring they have food support immediately upon reentry. Food insecurity disproportionately affects people returning from incarceration, who face barriers to employment, housing, and benefits access. Research indicates that the vast majority of people recently released from prison experience food insecurity. Over 90% of respondents in a multi-state survey reported they lacked reliable access to food, with more than one-third going an entire day without eating because they couldn’t afford food.³

Thirteen states have already successfully used SNAP pre-release application waivers to accept and process SNAP applications from institutional residents nearing release, allowing benefits to begin immediately upon reentry.⁴

In addition, this bill eliminates the restriction on individuals with prior drug convictions from accessing benefits unless they are enrolled in a treatment program. This outdated policy does not advance public safety or health outcomes; instead, it creates unnecessary obstacles for individuals involved in the justice system who are seeking to rebuild their lives and achieve self-sufficiency.

Finally, we would like to note that this bill gives the DHS until January 1, 2028 to implement this process, giving ample time to implement a pre-release process. Thank you for your consideration of HB 1518, as it is key in advancing food equity and strengthening our vital social safety nets.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, “SNAP Data Tables: National and/or State Level Monthly and/or Annual Data,” Food and Nutrition Service, 2025. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

² Hawai‘i Foodbank, “The State of Food Insecurity in Hawai‘i 2024-2025: Executive Summary,” Hawai‘i Foodbank, November 2025. https://hawaiifoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HFB.ExecutiveSummary2025_Web-FINAL.pdf

³ Wang, Emily A et al. “A pilot study examining food insecurity and HIV risk behaviors among individuals recently released from prison.” AIDS education and prevention : official publication of the International Society for AIDS Education vol. 25,2 (2013): 112-23. doi:10.1521/aeap.2013.25.2.112

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, “SNAP State Options Report,” Food and Nutrition Service, 2025, p. 35. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-stateOptionsReport-17edition-120925.pdf>



2026 Network Members

Aloha Harvest
Aloha United Way
Chef Hui
City and County of Honolulu
County of Hawai'i
Hawai'i Alliance for
Progressive Action (HAPA)
Hawai'i Appleseed
Hawai'i Children's Action
Network
Hawai'i Dept. of Agriculture
Hawai'i Dept. of Health
Hawai'i Food Bank
Hawai'i Food Bank - Kaua'i
Branch
Hawai'i Good Food Alliance
Hawai'i Public Health Institute
Kōkua Kalihi Valley
Lanakila Pacific
Mālama Kaua'i
Maui Department of
Agriculture
Maui Food Bank
Parents and Children Together
Supersistence
The Food Basket
The Pantry, by Feeding Hawai'i
Together
Wai'anae Coast
Comprehensive Health Center

hawaiihungeraction.org

House Committee on Finance

Thursday, February 26, 2026, at 2:00PM

RE: Support for HB 1518, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

SNAP is a critical lifeline for around 160,000 Hawai'i residents, supporting working families, individuals with disabilities, and others living on fixed or limited incomes. Yet food insecurity remains widespread, with 1 in 3 Hawai'i residents struggling due to the state's high cost of living. Without SNAP, many would not have any money to pay for food at all.

HB 1518 helps close a critical gap by allowing people to apply for SNAP before release from incarceration, ensuring access to food immediately upon reentry. Research shows that over 90% of people recently released from prison experience food insecurity, particularly in the days and weeks following release.¹ During this critical transition period, lack of food access can increase the risk of housing instability, poor health outcomes, and reliance on emergency services; providing support helps people focus on successfully rebuilding their lives.

This is a proven approach—thirteen states have already implemented SNAP pre-release application waivers, demonstrating that early access to food assistance is both feasible and effective.

Mahalo for your leadership and your consideration of HB 1518. By removing barriers to SNAP, this measure will help ensure that people returning to our communities have the basic support they need to thrive.

With aloha,
Hawai'i Hunger Action Network membership

¹ Wang, Emily A et al. "A pilot study examining food insecurity and HIV risk behaviors among individuals recently released from prison." *AIDS education and prevention : official publication of the International Society for AIDS Education* vol. 25,2 (2013): 112-23. [doi:10.1521/aeap.2013.25.2.112](https://doi.org/10.1521/aeap.2013.25.2.112)



ALOHA CARE

To: The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Director of Public Policy
Maria Rallojey, Public Policy Specialist

Hearing: Thursday, February 26, 2026, 2:00pm, Conference Room 308

RE: **HB1518 HD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB1518 HD1**. This measure would (1) require the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release by 1/1/2028, and (2) allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan founded by Hawai'i's Community Health Centers and the Queen Emma Clinics. We serve over 66,000 Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dual-eligible residents on all islands. Since 1994, AlohaCare has partnered with providers, government entities, and community-based organizations to meet the evolving needs of our safety net community as Hawai'i's only health plan focused solely on Medicaid-eligible individuals. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for equitable access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare's commitment to whole-person care and health equity includes addressing various social determinants of health, including food security. The transition back into the community is a period of high vulnerability. People often leave without stability or strong social support. Having SNAP benefits immediately upon or shortly after release strengthens their food security and removes barriers and delays to nutrition support access. As part of the safety net, AlohaCare sees how food insecurity worsens chronic conditions and mental health. As such, we support this measure to ensure early access to nutrition support for those nearing release, allowing them to focus on employment, health care, and family reunification; all of which improve long-term health and stability.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of HB1518 HD1**.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 12:44:32 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sylvia Dolena	Aloha Lokahi Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support: Establishes a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 9:46:36 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherry Pollack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1518 HD1 that would require the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release.

Successful reentry into society from the criminal justice system requires being able to meet basic needs such as food, health care, and housing, as well as access to employment and training services. When transitioning from jail or prison, people with convictions often face levels of food insecurity far higher than the general public. Studies have found that public assistance such as TANF and SNAP consistently reduces recidivism, while banning access to assistance has been linked to increases in recidivism. Denying access to basic needs programs makes it harder for people with convictions to get back on their feet. Hawaii can remove barriers to SNAP and address food insecurity, recidivism, and financial insecurity, allowing people with convictions to support themselves and their families and contribute to society.

I urge you to PASS this measure.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 5:18:54 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HB1518. This would require DHS to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This will help to strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, who will need this security to get back on their feet once released.

Mahalo for your attention.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 8:02:50 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:17:44 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kendall Krumm	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518.

Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 7:48:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Lenzer Medeiros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill. Everyone makes mistakes. Those who have been incarcerated, and are close to being released, need a helping hand. We can never know the circumstances really how they got into the situation they were in. The main thing is, they are being released, which one assumes they have done their time and have had counseling and have learned from their mistakes. Even if they end up back inside a jail, they deserve the dignity of having enough food.

By giving these people access to snap program, that's one less thing they have to grapple with as they make their way back into being productive citizens in society. Please support this bill

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 4:01:44 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB1518, a smart, compassionate, and cost-effective bill that closes a dangerous hunger gap for individuals reentering our communities after incarceration.

Currently, individuals cannot apply for SNAP benefits until after they are released. This creates a devastating delay: people walk out of prison with nothing—no income, no resources, and no way to purchase food—then wait weeks or months for their application to be processed. During this critical window, over **90% of people recently released report food insecurity**, and many go entire days without eating.

This is not only a moral failure; it is a public safety failure. Food instability is directly linked to increased risk of homelessness and recidivism. When we fail to meet the most basic human need for nutrition, we undermine the entire purpose of rehabilitation and set people up to fail.

HB1518 fixes this by allowing incarcerated individuals to apply for SNAP **before** release, ensuring benefits are available the moment they walk free. This is not a novel experiment; **thirteen states have successfully implemented SNAP pre-release waivers**, proving this approach works.

This bill is also a sound fiscal investment. Ensuring returning citizens have food access reduces reliance on emergency rooms, shelters, and crisis services. More importantly, it reduces recidivism, saving taxpayers the enormous cost of reincarceration.

Supporting basic needs at reentry is not a handout; it is a down payment on successful rehabilitation, community safety, and human dignity. I urge you to pass HB1518.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:20:07 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tanya Aynessazian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Todd and Members of the Committee,

Food security is foundational to financial stability — and here in Hawai‘i, one in three households struggles with it. That’s not a statistic we can ignore. When people can’t reliably put food on the table, everything else in their lives becomes more fragile.

Right now, federal law permanently disqualifies individuals convicted of certain drug-related felonies from accessing SNAP and TANF benefits. That means people who have already served their time are often locked out of basic food assistance just when they are trying to rebuild their lives.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture created a pre-release SNAP waiver that allows states to begin processing applications and conducting eligibility interviews before someone is released from prison or jail. The intention is simple and practical: reduce recidivism by making sure people reentering society aren’t immediately pushed into food insecurity.

This bill would allow Hawai‘i to join thirteen other states that have already adopted this waiver. It would require the Department of Human Services to seek federal approval to implement a pre-release SNAP application process for individuals nearing release.

Importantly, it would also remove barriers that prevent people with past drug-related convictions from applying for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

If we are serious about rehabilitation, economic stability, and breaking cycles of incarceration, ensuring access to food is a basic, common-sense place to start.

Tanya Yamanaka Aynessazian

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:20:35 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Douglas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:22:38 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Katherine Metzger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I strongly support HB 1518 HD1, which would establish a pre-release SNAP application process for individuals nearing release from incarceration.

Access to food is essential for successful reentry. Allowing eligible individuals to apply for SNAP before release helps ensure they can meet their basic needs immediately, improving stability, supporting employment and housing transitions, and reducing the likelihood of recidivism. This bill takes a practical step to strengthen food security and community safety while aligning Hawai'i with other states using federal waivers for this purpose.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:23:44 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members!

Please support HB 1518.

Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Mahalo!

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

Date: February 26, 2026
To: House Committee on Finance
From: Lindsay Ann Pacheco

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members:

My name is Lindsay Ann Pacheco and I am writing in strong support of HB1518 HD 1, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The bill would require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to establish a pre-release application process for SNAP, for inmates nearing release. The bill also allows individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

As someone who was previously incarcerated, experienced houselessness (homelessness) and who knows many others with the same experiences, I can tell you that being unable to apply for food, housing, and financial assistance before being released from prison dramatically increases the chances that a person will be released directly into homelessness and may return to jail or prison.

Under the current system, inmates are unable to apply for food or other assistance while still incarcerated. Therefore, they are often released from incarceration completely destitute, with no place to go and no way of surviving. Even if someone has been “rehabilitated” during incarceration, changed their ways, or gotten clean and sober, when they are released with nothing, they may be forced to turn to illegal means of surviving, or forced to rely on friends still experiencing addiction. This increases the chances of relapse and recidivism.

We should instead cover basic needs for people when they are first released (including food assistance through SNAP) to give them time to get back up on their feet and set them up for success.

I also support the elimination of the current requirement that people convicted of drug offenses must be in a treatment program to qualify for SNAP benefits. Again, we increase the chance of people succeeding, and getting or staying clean and sober, if we ensure that they can cover basic needs without resorting to illicit activities.

For these reasons, I strongly support HB1518 HD 1.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Lindsay Ann Pacheco, AA, BSW
pachecol@hawaii.edu

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:29:54 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nanea Lo, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of **HB 1518 HD1, relating to the establishment of a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process.**

Food security is foundational to stability, health, and successful reentry. In Hawai‘i, one in three households experiences food insecurity. For individuals returning home from incarceration, the barriers to stability are even higher. Without immediate access to food, employment, housing, and transportation become even more difficult to secure.

HB 1518 HD1 is a practical, evidence-based step toward strengthening reentry outcomes. The United States Department of Agriculture has established a prisoner pre-release SNAP administrative waiver that allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews prior to an individual’s release. The purpose of this waiver is clear: reduce recidivism by strengthening food security during the critical transition back into the community.

When individuals leave correctional facilities without access to basic necessities, they are placed at higher risk of instability and reoffending. Ensuring that eligible individuals can apply for and, if qualified, begin receiving SNAP benefits as soon as they are released helps create a smoother transition, reduces strain on families, and improves community safety overall.

Thirteen other states have already taken advantage of this waiver. Hawai‘i should join them in implementing smart policies that support successful reentry. Establishing this process would require the Department of Human Services to seek the federal waiver and create a structured pre-release application system for inmates nearing release. It would also ensure that individuals convicted of offenses involving possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance are able to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Supporting people in their reentry journey strengthens families, reduces recidivism, and improves public safety. Food security is not a luxury — it is a basic necessity that allows individuals to rebuild their lives with dignity.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support HB 1518 HD1.

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo, 96826

Carbon Cashback Hawai'i Member

Hawai'i Workers Center Board Member

Honolulu Tenants Union Member

Hawai'i Tax Fairness Coalition

Clean Elections Hawai'i Member

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 1:00:49 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of. Thank you.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 10:24:36 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai‘i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 10:38:15 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tristyn Wiehl	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 11:01:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:
Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 2:00 pm
Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference
State Capitol

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT : HB 1518, HD1 - RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, my Rep. Miyake for Wailuku, Rep. Yamashita of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I live in Wailuku, Maui. I write to you today in **strong support of HB 1518, HD1 - Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**. This is a pivotal piece of legislation that has the potential to improve SNAP access and to strengthen our state's food security landscape.

As you may be aware, SNAP is critical to the over 155,000 residents who receive benefits in Hawai'i. Even though SNAP is a critical program for to provide food security for our friends and neighbors, SNAP applicants face many barriers to applying for federal SNAP benefits. Social service organizations have witnessed clients lose crucial benefits during the recertification process, despite no changes to eligibility.

The pre-release program included in this bill provides immediate SNAP access to formerly incarcerated people, over 70% of whom are affected by not being allowed to apply to SNAP before being released. This bill will help address food insecurity and support successful reintegration of this population. Eliminating the drug felony ban will allow our residents to receive the benefits they deserve, regardless of treatment status.

If the purpose of incarceration is rehabilitation, as the evidence suggests it should be and as our moral imperative requires, we must remove barriers to food security and successful reintegration. I request that you **support HB1518, HD1** because it strives to achieve this shared goal of compassion and dignity for all who call Hawai'i home.

Mahalo for all you do for your constituents,

Christine L. Andrews, J.D.
Wailuku, Maui

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 11:54:30 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jackie Keefe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jackie Keefe and I am in **strong support of HB1518 HD1**, which establishes a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release.

It is well known that it's challenging for formerly incarcerated people to find employment, and this bill takes steps to provide them with food security upon their release. I'm not sure if you've ever tried to apply for SNAP benefits, but it is a tedious process and one that's difficult to complete if you are hungry or lack resources.

Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 12:06:27 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John C Wert III	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support HB1518. The orange faced idiot in the White House did away with SNAP and we in Hawaii need SNAP, in part to reduce food insecurity among residents and in part to reduce recidivism due also to food insecurity among recently released felons.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 1:20:04 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in favor of HB1518 HD1 because I believe giving a hand up to people who were incarcerated for drug offenses is compassionate and will enhance the health of our society, keeping people out of poverty and reducing recidivism. Mahalo for considering my views

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 1:52:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Nelson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 25, 2026

Testimony in Support of **HB 1518 - Establishing a pre-release SNAP application process**

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Lauren Nelson, and **I am writing to express strong support for HB 1518**, a pivotal piece of legislation that has the potential to improve SNAP access and ultimately strengthen our state’s food security landscape. This bill will strengthen SNAP by:

- Allowing inmates to apply for SNAP before being released allows people to access food immediately upon reentry, instead of waiting weeks or months during community reintegration.
- Over 90% of people recently released from prison report food insecurity, and many go entire days without eating.
- Thirteen states have successfully implemented SNAP pre-release waivers.
- Ensuring food access reduces reliance on emergency services, homelessness, and reincarceration, ultimately benefiting individuals saving taxpayer dollars.

Mahalo for your leadership and for your consideration of HB 1518. This bill is essential to building a thriving, food-secure Hawai‘i while strengthening one of our most essential safety nets.

Mahalo,

Lauren Nelson

Kula, Maui

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 1:57:06 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518.

Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.