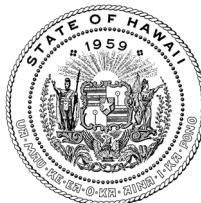


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



TOMMY JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

Melanie Martin
Deputy Director
Administration

Vacant
Deputy Director
Correctional Institutions

Sanna Muñoz
Deputy Director
Rehabilitation Services
and
Programs

No. _____

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKUĀINA 'O HAWAII
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
AND REHABILITATION**
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalu Kalaima
a Ho'oponopono Ola*
1177 Alakea Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

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

by
Tommy Johnson, Director
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

House Committee on Public Safety
Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Friday, February 13, 2026; 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 411 & Via Video Conference

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, 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 who were 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 are currently working on a pilot program with DHS to assist those exiting our facilities to apply for SNAP benefits ten (10) days prior to their release. When inmates are engaged with services prior to their exit from our facilities, it increases their chances of successful reintegration into our communities and helps to reduce recidivism.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKALE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKALE

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'OKALE

February 11, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
House Committee on Public Safety

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

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

Hearing: February 13, 2026, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 411 & Via Videoconference, 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, or 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.

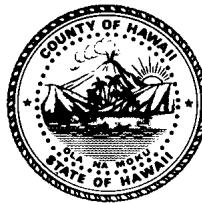
The Department will use lessons learned from this pilot to determine how and when to expand this to additional DCR facilities and whether a waiver would further enhance the

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

The Department appreciates the measure's acknowledgment (page 2, line 13) of the current process to update its benefits eligibility solution, 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 are presently scheduled to begin the pilot in October 2026 with a statewide rollout in February 2027.

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

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



Benson Medina
Director

Dennis Lin
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

25 Aupuni Street, Room 1301 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720-4252
(808) 961-8366 • Fax (808) 935-1205
E-mail: chresdev@co.hawaii.hi.us

February 11, 2026
HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Friday, February 13, 2026
10:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 411

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

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto 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,

The handwritten signature of Benson Medina, Director of the Department of Research and Development.

Benson Medina
Director

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MARK PATTERSON
CHAIR

CHRISTIN M. JOHNSON
OVERSIGHT COORDINATOR

COMMISSIONERS
HON. R. MARK BROWNING (ret.)

HON. RONALD IBARRA (ret.)

MARTHA TORNEY

HON. MICHAEL A. TOWN (ret.)

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 Della Au Belatti, Chair
The Honorable Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
House Committee on Public Safety

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: Friday, February 13, 2026; 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 411

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, 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.



Hawai'i

Committee: House Committee on Public Safety
Hearing Date/Time: Friday, February 13, 2026, at 10:00AM
Place: Conference Room 411 & Via Videoconference
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of
HB1518 HD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition
Assistance Program**

Dear Chair Belatti, Vice-Chair Iwamoto, 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-formerly-incarcerated#_ftn6.



HIPHI Board

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Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

*Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living*

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: February 11, 2026

To: Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair
Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Public Safety

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

Hrg: February 13, 2026 at 10:00 AM in Conference Room 411

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".

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



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 Kalih 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 Public Safety

Friday, February 13, 2026, at 10:00AM

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

Dear Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and members of the Committee,

SNAP is a critical lifeline for more than 155,000 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)



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 |
Honolulu, HI 96813
P: 808-533-1292 | e:
info@hawaiifood.com

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Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Advisor*
Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Public Safety
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 13, 2026

TIME: 10am

RE: HB1518 HD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure. As the measure notes, food security is an essential part of financial stability. We support promoting the financial stability of formerly incarcerated individuals by allowing the State to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released.

We encourage the Committee to pass this measure, and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



To: The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair
The Honorable Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
House Committee on Public Safety

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

Hearing: Friday, February 13, 2026, 10:00am, Conference Room 411

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**.

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 Public Safety
Re: **HB1518 HD1– Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**
Hawaii State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 13, 2026; 10:00 AM

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

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



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

SUPPORT FOR HB 1518 HD1: RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

TO: House Committee on Public Safety

FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i

Hearing: Friday, February 13, 2026; 10:00 AM; CR 411 or videoconference

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members, Committee on Public Safety:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 1518 HD1**, which requires the Department of Human Services, upon receiving a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release from Hawai'i's correctional facilities. My name is Tina Andrade from Catholic Charities Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax-exempt, Community-Based Organization that has provided social services in Hawai'i for more than 78 years, now serving over 40,000 individuals statewide each year. CCH offers a wide range of programs supporting children, families, older adults, immigrants, and individuals experiencing homelessness. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for Hawai'i's most vulnerable, and we have a long-standing history of leadership in affordable housing, homelessness solutions, and child welfare.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i strongly supports HB 1518 HD1 because it will reduce recidivism, strengthen food security, and support a smoother transition back into the community for formerly incarcerated individuals. Many people leaving correctional facilities face immediate challenges—including the risk of homelessness—and access to SNAP can provide vital stability as they work to rebuild their lives.

This bill would ensure that individuals nearing release are identified and assisted with the SNAP application process **before** they return to the community. Having benefits activated upon release can make a critical difference in meeting basic needs and reducing the likelihood of returning to the criminal justice system. Notably, **thirteen states** have already obtained the federal waiver needed to implement similar pre-release SNAP application programs.

Thank you for hearing this important measure, which represents a meaningful step toward increasing food security for the people of Hawai'i.

If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson, at (808) 527-4813.



February 12, 2026

**Testimony in Support of H.B. 1518 HD 1
Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

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

Aloha United Way stands in **support of HB 1518 HD1**. Food security is a foundational pillar of financial stability, especially for individuals and families already living on the margins. In Hawai'i, 40% of households fall below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold, meaning they are working but unable to afford basic necessities like housing, childcare, and food. For individuals reentering the community after incarceration, the risk of instability is even greater.

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.

H.B. 1518 is a smart, preventative investment that supports health, economic stability, public safety, and community well-being. We urge your support.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Michelle Bartell
President & CEO
Aloha United Way



Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for HB 1518 – Relating to SNAP
House Committee on Public Safety
Friday, February 13, 2026, at 10:00AM

Dear Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, 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 155,000 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>



Date of Hearing: February 13, 2026

To: Chair Della Au Bellati, Vice Chair Kim Coco Iwamoto, and the House Committee on Public Safety

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.

Date: February 11, 2026
To: House Committee on Public Safety
From: Lindsay Pacheco
Re: SUPPORT for HB1518 HD1

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Committee Members,

My name is Lindsay Pacheco and I am writing in strong support of HB1518 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 homelessness (homelessness) and who knows many others with the same experiences, I can tell you that not being able to apply for food, housing, and financial assistance prior to 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. Too often I have witnessed this with many fellow homeless individuals, myself included. Even if someone has been “rehabilitated” during incarceration, changed their ways, or gotten clean and sober, when they are released with absolutely nothing, they may be forced to return 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.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Lindsay Pacheco, AA, BSW
pachecol@hawaii.edu

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:56:50 AM
Testimony for PBS on 2/13/2026 10:00:00 AM

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: 2/11/2026 1:18:26 PM
Testimony for PBS on 2/13/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anne Leake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai. I am writing to express strong support for Bill no., 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 nearing release time to apply for SNAP so they can use SNAP upon release. Re-entry to society is difficult for inmates, and being able to eat regularly contributes to good health and good mood. I am a retired nurse practitioner and know that food is health. Please give HB1518 favorable consideration for the health for this vulnerable group. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 3:26:55 PM
Testimony for PBS on 2/13/2026 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Support

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 4:01:37 PM
Testimony for PBS on 2/13/2026 10:00:00 AM

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: 2/11/2026 4:12:21 PM
Testimony for PBS on 2/13/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1518.

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 4:41:35 PM
Testimony for PBS on 2/13/2026 10:00:00 AM

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 consideration.

Marcia Kemble
Makiki

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair

Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Hearing:

Friday, February 13, 2026 at 10:00 am

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Conference Room 411

Hawai‘i State Capitol

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

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, 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: 2/11/2026 6:20:55 PM
Testimony for PBS on 2/13/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
chelsea pang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Setting people up for financial stability after incarnation will help recidivism

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 6:41:57 PM
Testimony for PBS on 2/13/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
gayle goodman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

House Public Safety Committee

2/13/26 10:00am

RE: Support for HB1518

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

My name is Gayle Goodman. I am writing as an individual citizen to express strong support for HB1518, 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:

Enhancing Accessibility

- SNAP is critical to the over 155,000 residents who receive benefits in Hawai‘i.
- SNAP applicants face many barriers to applying for federal SNAP benefits.
- Some SNAP users lose crucial benefits during the recertification process, despite no changes to eligibility.
- Elderly Simplified Application Program (ESAP) extends the recertification period to every 3 years and allows kūpuna and adults with disabilities to waive recertification interviews.
- 25 other states have already implemented ESAP.
- 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.
- Ensuring food access reduces reliance on emergency services, homelessness, and reincarceration, ultimately benefiting individuals saving taxpayer dollars.
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Mahalo for your leadership and for your consideration of HB1518. This bill is essential to building a thriving, food-secure Hawai‘i while strengthening one of our most essential safety nets. Thank you, Gayle Goodman

To: Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Public Safety

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: February 12, 2026

RE: House Bill 1518 HD1
Measure Title: RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.
Report Title: DHS; SNAP; Incarcerated Individuals; Felony Drug Offenders

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support House Bill 1518 HD1. Thank you for introducing this bill.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore

HB-1518-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 7:32:44 AM
Testimony for PBS on 2/13/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordan Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 13, 2026
Testimony in Support of HB 1518, HD1
Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Committee on Public Safety

Dear Chair Au Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee,

I am a volunteer for a prison reentry program and am in ***strong support*** of HB 1518. The food provided inside correctional facilities is often described as bland, inedible, and lacking nutritional value. Many incarcerated individuals rely on commissaries to supplement their diets, but these options are often unhealthy and overpriced—where a pack of dry saimin can cost \$5. This lack of access to nutritious food has negative long-term impacts on the health and well-being of incarcerated individuals, particularly as they prepare to reenter the community.

Studies estimate that 70-91% of people leaving correctional facilities are food insecure, meaning they don't know where their next meal will come from after release. Despite this, federal regulations require individuals to wait until they are released to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, causing delays that leave many unable to meet basic food needs during a critical time of transition.

HB 1518 addresses this urgent issue by allowing incarcerated individuals to apply for SNAP benefits before release, ensuring access to nutritious food immediately upon reentry. Hawai'i has the opportunity to join 14 other states that have implemented pre-release waivers, proven to reduce recidivism and support successful reentry.

By passing HB 1518, the legislature can support and align this effort with Hawai'i's recent approval of the pre-release coverage provision in the 1115 Medicaid Demonstration waiver, making the state a leader in comprehensive reentry support. With food insecurity often contributing to the alarming 43% rearrest rate within a year of release, this bill represents a vital step toward breaking the cycle of recidivism and fostering healthier communities.

Please pass HB1518 and ensure justice-involved individuals have access to the resources they need to successfully rebuild their lives. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Jordan Smith
Honolulu 96817



HB1518 HD1 SNAP for Offender Reentry

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair

Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Tuesday, Feb 13, 2026: 10:00: Room 411 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.

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Feb 12, 2026, 11:52 am



LATE

HB1518HD1 SNAP for Offender Reentry

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair

Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Friday, Feb 13, 2026: 10:00: Room 411 Videoconference

Hina Mauka Supports HB1518HD1:

ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Brian Baker. I am the President and CEO for Hina Mauka, a mental health and substance use disorder treatment and prevention agency for thousands of adults and adolescents on Oahu and Kauai, including recovery-oriented services and housing transitional living programs.

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 and successful reentry.

It is a well-established fact that many people exiting incarceration are in need of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment. While some people choose to enter SUD treatment immediately upon release to receive the support they need to be successful in their return back into their community; some do not. For these individuals, they return to the community with no income, food insecurity, unstable housing, and limited support. **With unmet basic needs, people experience increased stress, medical instability, and higher risk of relapse and recidivism.**

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.

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 probable crises. This process would reduce gaps, encourage justice-involved individuals to seek care for their SUD and/or medical conditions, thus strengthening coordination between correctional systems, human services, and community-based SUD treatment providers.

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.

RECEIVED
Date & Time

Feb 12, 2026, 11:52 am

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

LATE

Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor



COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Representative Della Belatti, Chair

Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Friday, February 13, 2026

10:00 am

Room 411 and VIDEOCONFERENCE

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

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto 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 3,654 Hawai`i individuals living behind bars¹ and under the “care and custody” of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation on February 2, 2026. We are always mindful that 799 – 43% 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.

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 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)

¹ **DCR Weekly Population Report, February 2, 2026**

dcr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-02-02.pdf

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 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 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.