



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1518, RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

DATE: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 **TIME:** 9:00 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 329

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Erin L.S. Yamashiro, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Marten and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General appreciates the intent of this bill and provides the following comments.

This bill: (1) adds a new section to chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), requiring the Department of Human Services (DHS) to seek a federal waiver to allow inmates nearing release from incarceration to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and to establish a pre-release SNAP application process; and (2) amends section 346-53.3, HRS, to allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, regardless of whether the individuals are in compliance with treatment.

Article III, section 14, of the Hawaii State Constitution provides, in pertinent part, that "[e]ach law shall embrace but one subject, which shall be expressed in its title." The purposes of this constitutional requirement are (1) "to prevent hodge-podge or logrolling legislation," and (2) "to prevent surprise of fraud upon the Legislature by means of provisions in bills of which titles give no intimation," and (3) "to apprise the people of proposed matters of legislation." *Schwab v. Ariyoshi*, 58 Haw. 25, 30-31, 564 P.2d 135, 139 (1977).

As drafted, the amendments to section 346-53.3, HRS, in section 3 of the bill may present a single-subject constitutional concern. Specifically, section 3 would allow individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for both SNAP benefits **and** TANF benefits, regardless of their treatment status. However, the title of the bill, "Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program," does not appear to be broad enough to encompass the TANF program.

To avoid a potential single subject constitutional challenge, the Department recommends amending the bill to limit the provision to SNAP applicants only. This may be accomplished by amending section 3 of the bill on page 5, lines 3 through 9, to read as follows:

**[+]
§346-53.3
Temporary assistance for needy families and
[food stamps] supplemental nutrition assistance program for
individuals with a felony conviction [which] that has as an element
the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance.
[Section] (a) For purposes of the temporary assistance for needy families
program, section 115(a) of Public Law 104-193 shall not apply in Hawaii to
persons who are complying with treatment or who have not refused or
failed to comply with treatment.
(b) For purposes of the supplemental nutrition assistance program,
section 115(a) of Public Law 104-193 shall not apply in Hawaii.**

We respectfully ask the Committee to pass this bill with the recommended amendment.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
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 1, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

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

Hearing: Tuesday, February 3, 2026, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329, 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) last month 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 process. Respectfully, the proposed statutory framework may be premature.

The Department appreciates the measure's acknowledgement (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

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February 2, 2026
HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Tuesday, February 3, 2026
9:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 329

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

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds 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** 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**.

Respectfully,

Benson Medina
Director, Research and Development

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
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

by
Tommy Johnson, Director
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 3, 2026; 9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & Via Video Conference

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1518, 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.

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 NŌ
235 S. Beretania Street, 16th Floor
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
(808) 587-4160

TO: The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

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

SUBJECT: House Bill 1518, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Hearing: Tuesday, February 3, 2026; 9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 329

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC) **supports** House Bill 1518, 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.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

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

TO: House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: **Tuesday, February 3, 2025, 9:00 AM; CR 329 or Videoconference**

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee on Human Services and Homelessness:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 1518**, 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 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.



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone (808) 527-4813 •



HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 3:09:39 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sylvia Dolena	Pele Lani Farm LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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.



HB1518 SNAP for Offender Reentry

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Tuesday, Feb 3, 2026: 9:00: Room 329 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB1518:

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 probable 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 / kat.caphi@gmail.com

Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor



COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOMELESSNESS

Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

9:00 am

Room 329 and VIDEOCONFERENCE

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

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds 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 more than two 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 January 26, 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** that requires the Department of Human services – upon obtaining a federal waiver – to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for incarcerated persons nearing release, including those convicted of an offense involving possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment.

¹ DCR Weekly Population Report, January 26, 2026

[Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-01-26.pdf](#)

² Reentry Myth Busters

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

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 would move Hawai`i to the 19th state that has eliminated the ban! 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! Mahalo for this opportunity to share our mana`o.



HB1518 SNAP for Offender Reentry

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Tuesday, Feb 3, 2026: 9:00: Room 329 Videoconference

Hina Mauka Supports HB1518:

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.



HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS
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Department of Pediatrics

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Hawai'i Health Partners

Titimaia Ta'ase, JD
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Joyce Lee-Ibarra, MS
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Misty Pacheco, DrPH
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Dina Shek, JD
Medical-Legal Partnership
For Children in Hawai'i

JoAnn Tsark, MPH
John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native
Hawaiian Research Office

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

Environmental Health

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: January 31, 2026

To: Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair
Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

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

Hrg: February 3, 2026 at 9:00 AM in Conference Room 329

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating, Active Living² (HEAL) coalition **supports HB 1518**, 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 benefits, 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 inmates' 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 Islanders³. 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



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

Senate Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 3, 2026

9:00 AM

Room 329

Aloha e Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB1518** 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.

HB1518 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 felony drug convictions.² Conditioning access to food assistance on treatment participation or availability

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

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

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. HB1518 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**.

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



House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports: HB1518

February 3rd, 2026 at 9:00am; Conference Room 329

Aloha Chair Lisa Marten, Vice Chair Ikaika Olds and members of the committee,

HAPA is testifying in **support** of HB1518 which requires the Department of Human Services to: (1) seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release; 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.

Currently, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance however, as revealed in the preamble of this bill, federal law allows state legislatures to opt out of the disqualification or modify the disqualification to impose a less severe restriction. This legislation would allow Hawai'i to join thirteen other states that have received a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications.

With 1 in 3 households experiencing food insecurity, this bill advances state efforts towards fair access to food – in this case via SNAP benefits for individuals transitioning out of incarceration by providing immediate food assistance. Enhancing benefits and accessibility empowers individuals in our community, providing them with the support they need to thrive and succeed.

Please support HB1518.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Anne Frederick,
Executive Director



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 Human Services
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 9:00AM

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, 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://hawaiiifoodbank.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
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The Food Basket
The Pantry, by Feeding Hawai'i
Together
Wai'anae Coast
Comprehensive Health Center

hawaiihungeraction.org

Human Services & Homelessness

Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 9:00AM

RE: Support for HB 1518, Relating to Human Services

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, 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 91% 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



February 1, 2026

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

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

Aloha United Way stands in **support** of **HB 1518**. 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,

Michelle Bartell
President & CEO
Aloha United Way



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 Human Services & Homelessness
Re: **HB1518 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**
Hawaii State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 3, 2026; 9:00 AM

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

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB1518**, 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



February 3, 2026

To: Chair Lisa Marten, Vice Chair Ikaika Olds, and the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

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

Aloha,

I am writing in **strong support of HB 1518**. 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**.

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.



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TO: Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 3, 2026

TIME: 9am

RE: HB1518 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 Lisa Marten, Chair
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

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

Hearing: Tuesday, February 3, 2026, 9:00am, Conference Room 329

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

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB1518**. This measure would (1) require the Department of Human Services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for individuals nearing release and implement the process 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 supports. 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**.



LATE Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

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February 2, 2026

Support for HB1518 – SNAP Benefits Prior to Release

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

My name is Dr. Hannah Preston-Pita, and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the Big Island Substance Abuse Council (BISAC), a nonprofit organization providing substance use disorder treatment, mental health services, reentry support, and prevention programs across Hawai'i Island. I am writing in strong support of HB1518, which would allow eligible individuals to begin receiving SNAP benefits prior to release from incarceration.

Food insecurity is one of the most immediate and destabilizing challenges individuals face upon reentry. The period immediately following release is also when individuals are at highest risk for relapse, overdose, recidivism, and homelessness. Ensuring access to basic nutrition during this critical transition period is a practical, evidence-informed strategy that promotes stability, dignity, and successful reintegration.

In our work with justice-involved individuals, we consistently see how the lack of basic supports such as food undermines recovery efforts, treatment engagement, and compliance with reentry plans. HB1518 helps address this gap by allowing benefits to be in place at the moment of release, rather than weeks later, when harm may already have occurred.

This bill is especially important for rural and neighbor island communities, where access to food, services, and employment can be limited and delays in benefit activation have greater consequences. HB1518 represents a smart, cost-effective policy that supports public health, reduces strain on emergency and crisis systems, and improves reentry outcomes. We respectfully urge the Committee to support HB1518 and move this measure forward.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration and for your commitment to policies that strengthen reentry, recovery, and community well-being across Hawai'i.

Mahalo nui loa,

Hannah Preston-Pita Psy, D. Ed, D. CSAC
Chief Executive Officer



Committee: House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Hearing Date/Time: Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 9:00AM
Place: Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of HB1518 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

Dear Chair Marten, Vice-Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i (ACLU-HI) supports HB1518 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.



Dedicated to safe, responsible, humane, and effective drug policies since 1993

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1518

TO: Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and HSH Committee

FROM: Nikos Leverenz, DPFH Board President

DATE: February 3, 2026 (9:00 A.M.)

Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i (DPFH) **strongly supports** HB 1518, which provides for the establishment of a pre-release application process for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to facilitate access for inmates. Importantly, this bill also allows all individuals convicted of a drug related offense to apply for SNAP benefits regardless of treatment status.

Criminalization is the most severe and lasting stigma that government perpetuates against those with substance use disorders, others who use drugs, and those with mental health conditions. The continued criminalization of behavioral health issues and poverty has lasting and far-reaching impacts on individuals and families from under-resourced communities, often across generations. In addition to loss of access to public benefits like SNAP, [the Vera Institute of Justice has identified the following areas where individuals and their families are impacted for extended periods](#): family separation, unemployment and loss of income, loss of immigration status and deportation, housing instability, loss of access to higher education, loss of civil rights, revocation of driver's licenses, and long-term surveillance.

With respect to surveillance, Hawaii has longest average term of probation in the nation, [per a 2020 report from the Pew Charitable Trusts](#). The state has not enacted meaningful probation reform since, nor have county prosecutors systematically advanced [drug policies grounded in harm reduction, public health, and racial justice](#). In the context of drug law enforcement, as with other aspects of the state's criminal legal system, [Native Hawaiians are disproportionately impacted at each stage of the process](#).

According to the [National Inventory of the Collateral Consequences of Conviction](#), the number of collateral consequences for any felony conviction is 171. Additionally, there are 117 collateral consequences that stem from a misdemeanor conviction.

DPFH also recommends that those convicted of drug-related offenses be eligible to apply for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits regardless of treatment status. Per the [Collateral Consequences Resource Center](#), 25 states. In addition to most of New England, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, and the Pacific Northwest, states that have repealed SNAP and TANF restrictions include Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Virginia, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. (See "[Assessing SNAP and TANF Benefits after a Drug Conviction: A Survey of State Laws](#)," December 2023.)

Since 1993 DPFH has advanced public discussions and policy changes around the Hawai'i's drug policies, which continue to advance severe criminal penalties and extended periods of criminal legal supervision. DPFH also supports policy changes around substance use and behavioral health issues that are anchored in harm reduction, public health, and human rights. These changes include broader access to community-based behavioral health treatment, the repeal of cannabis prohibition in favor of rational regulation, reducing the severity of sentencing laws, prosecutorial practices, penological practices, and criminal legal supervision, and advancing other changes to laws and policies that reduce the impact of the criminal legal system on individuals and families from under-resourced communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 1:18:52 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Young	Kapalama Neighborhood Security Watch	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Support

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 3:05:31 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgia L Hoopes	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.

Mahalo!

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 3:09:21 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Austin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill - important to help get people back on track!

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 3:19:52 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
marie louise	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this program

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 4:47:47 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg Kahn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1518 to provide pre-release SNAP applications to help alleviate food insecurity.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 4:48:55 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass!

Dr. Judith White

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 4:52:34 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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. Mahalo.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 4:55:04 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 5:54:41 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Colleen Rost-Banik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness,

My name is Colleen Rost-Banik. I am an Instructor of Sociology at University of Hawaii, Manoa. I also facilitate a creative writing project at the Women's Community Correctional Center.

I write in support of HB1518, which would support a program to begin the eligibility process for SNAP benefits while they are still incarcerated so that they have access to food upon their release from prison. I urge you to support this bill as reentry is extremely challenging, and most people coming out of prison do not have the financial resources needed for survival.

I have seen many people come back to prison after being released. I've heard time and time again that when they are released, they simply do not have the financial supports needed to be successful. So, they revert to survival techniques that can land them back in prison. As a State, we need to do a much better job of preparing people for a successful reentry. HB1518 would not only help people who are being released from prison but also help the community at large. When we don't help our neighbors who are financially strapped, the entire community suffers.

Please support HB1518.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.
Colleen Rost-Banik, Ph.D.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 7:10:06 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ANDREW ISODA	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.

Mahalo,

Andrew Isoda
Lahaina, Mau'i

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 7:16:47 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealakai Hammond	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. As a mental health professional who has worked with individuals with substance use disorders transitioning back into the community, I am acutely aware how food insecurity is intrinsically linked to recidivism, and how having enough food can truly be the deciding factor between a life of recovery or a return to a life of survival crime.

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,

Kealakai Hammond, LMHC

Honolulu

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 8:12:02 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518, which will allow 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.

Thank you for helping people leaving incarceration to have food.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 8:33:42 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathy Shimata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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,

Kathy Shimata

Honolulu. 96822

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 9:21:48 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noel Shaw	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.



February 3, 2026

**Testimony in Support of HB 1518
Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Committee on Human Services and Homelessness**

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

I am a volunteer for a prison reentry program and I am here to testify 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 aligns 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

Jordan Smith
Principal Consultant
Jordan Smith Consulting

Where strategy takes root

jnsconsulting1@outlook.com | Hawai'i | [linkedin.com/company/jordan-smith-consulting](https://www.linkedin.com/company/jordan-smith-consulting)

HB-1518

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 9:50:20 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin Hagan	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 that 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

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 10:04:51 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carrie Ann Shirota	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

I am an attorney, justice advocate and former Director of MEO's Reintegration Program on Maui which provided integrated case management, treatment and holistics support services to help individuals transition to the community after incarceration.

Too many individuals are leaving jails and prisons without IDs, housing, jobs and access to food. Housing and food are necessary for wellness, survival and successful reintegration.

For those reasons, I strongly support HB1518 RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this measure.

Sincerely,
Carrie Ann Shirota, Esq.

Honolulu, Hawaii

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 7:03:49 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Seikai Darcy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Full support HB 1518.

Aloha Committee Members,

As the coordinator for the women's mentoring team at Maui County Correctional Center and the Founder of Share Your Mana which assists those living unhoused, I have a front row seat as to the importance of this bill moving into efficacy.

Withholding food access does not inspire healthy change. I personally see how the impoverished conditions those I am working with impact their decisions. 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. Let's hui this immediately.

Those formerly incarcerated and their ohana's need this basic support, not punishment or barriers after completing their sentences. Gaining employment is a major barrier to financial and housing needs and food must be a community value everyone of us upholds. If we want people to be successful after release, they need basic supports. Full stop.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the US 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.

Thirteen other states have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. Let's be the fourteenth and join those already establishing healthy pathways back into the community.

I fully support the Department of Human Services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This 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.

With appreciation for this incredible work,

Lisa Darcy, Kula, Maui, HI

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 7:16:21 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ethan Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of **HB 1518**, which would establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for individuals nearing release from incarceration.

Food insecurity affects **one in three households in Hawai‘i**, and access to food is a foundational component of financial stability and successful reentry. Individuals leaving correctional facilities often face immediate barriers to meeting basic needs, which increases the risk of housing instability and recidivism. To date, thirteen states have already adopted pre-release SNAP waivers intended to strengthen food security and reduce recidivism during the critical transition period back into the community.

HB 1518 would allow Hawai‘i to join these states by directing the Department of Human Services to seek a federal waiver and establish a pre-release SNAP application process. This bill also ensures that individuals convicted of drug-related offenses are able to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status: an important step toward equitable access to basic supports.

I urge you to support HB 1518 and take this meaningful step toward improving food equity, public health, and community well-being in Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ethan Chang

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 9:15:08 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl hendrickson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

If these individuals are fit to be reintroduced into society, they certainly qualify for some nutritional help to support their efforts to be functioning community members

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 9:29:02 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha:

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.

Please pass this bill.

-Shay Chan Hodges

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 9:38:34 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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.

Mahalo,

Kendall Krumm

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 11:32:36 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mavis Oliveira-Medeiros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha HSH Chair/s & Committee:

We are in strong support of HB 1518. We come from East Maui & hear that we're one of the lowest income areas in Hawaii. While we've always worked & never depended on gov't funds for living, we have helped many who do need it by taking them to shop on the other side of the island, where they can get way more for their money. These are people who one spouse is handicapped & the other works & tries to keep food on the table & bills paid.

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.

We'd appreciate it if you would support those who need our/your help to survive.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Mavis Oliveira-Medeiros & ohana +5

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 11:46:51 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in favor of HB1518 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

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 12:21:02 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melinda G Morey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha - I support this bill to help those leaving incarceration. It is hard enough to reenter society with the stigma of criminal - let's help them feed themselves and their families. Show aloha. Too many people incarcerated in these desperate chaotic times.

Mahalo, Melinda Morey

Testimony in support of HB1518
Submitted by: Teliyah K. Haywood

Dear Chair Lisa Marten and Members of the Committee of Human Services and Homelessness,

My name is Teliyah Kalei Haywood and I am a social work student at UH Mānoa. I am writing to strongly support Bill HB1518 to implement the pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program application process for incarcerated individuals scheduled for release.

The passing of this bill is crucial to reducing food insecurity, specifically for formerly incarcerated individuals. From my personal perspective, those who have been recently released from prison and do not receive essential support are worse off than they were during their time in prison. Without access to food, the expectation of these individuals to maintain their mental health, employment, sobriety and overall wellbeing is nearly impossible. There is a frequent houseless individual that is always near my job whom I allow to charge his belongings and fill his water whenever he asks. He is a very respectable and honest individual who was formerly incarcerated for drug distribution. However, I have watched his health decline over the past 3 years, slowly becoming thinner and is now wheel-chair bound. After asking what had happened after not seeing him for a month and then seeing him in a wheelchair, he expressed that he was found on the side of the building suffering from severe dehydration and malnutrition. I always bring him a few bottles of water and food that my coworkers and I haven't finished, however if he were to apply for SNAP benefits, his health would surely incline and allow him to walk without a wheelchair promoting his chances of finding employment. Allowing individuals to apply for SNAP benefits prior to their release can potentially eliminate the difficulties that are the result of food insecurity.

In a study published by the National Institute of Health, formerly incarcerated individuals are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity resulting in homelessness than those who have not been incarcerated. Additionally, over 25% of formerly incarcerated individuals experience difficulty in establishing employment due to their conviction, increasing the likelihood of experiencing food insecurity. The jobs that often hire former felons are labor intensive which requires a balanced and nutritious diet, however coupled with food insecurity these jobs are more difficult to maintain in addition to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 11 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights define food security as a fundamental human right. Denying formerly incarcerated individuals access to supplemental food assistance is denying them of their rights as a human being. Every individual deserves access to nutrition, regardless of their criminal record. It is essential to support and pass bill HB1518 to ensure the opportunity of food security is presented to all formerly incarcerated individuals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo nui,
Teliyah K. Haywood
Contact: Teliyahh@hawaii.edu

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 2:40:18 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Douglas	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

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 3:34:45 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support HB1518 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

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 3:39:10 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alex Tam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Poverty is the largest cause of crime. By helping to fight poverty and ensure that ALL people have access to enough food to survive, we can take care of our fellow human beings and reduce the rates of recidivism. I support this bill because I know that people need and deserve have their human needs met. In addition, by helping people access food, they will have more capacity to contribute to society, hold jobs, etc.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 4:40:25 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for hearing HB1518 which would allow eligible incarcerated individuals to apply for SNAP benefits before release.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 5:01:58 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 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

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 5:39:08 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Jennifer Lum from 'Ewa Beach. I am writing in support for HB 1518 Establish SNAP Pre-Release Enrollment Program. This bill is really important for helping more people get access to food.

- This bill closes a dangerous hunger gap at reentry. 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.
- Food insecurity after incarceration is extreme. Over 90% of people recently released from prison report food insecurity, and many go entire days without eating. Food instability increases the risk of homelessness and recidivism.
- This is an evidence-based hunger intervention. Thirteen states have successfully implemented SNAP pre-release waivers.
- Supporting basic needs saves taxpayer dollars. Ensuring food access reduces reliance on emergency services, homelessness, and reincarceration, ultimately benefiting individuals saving taxpayer dollars.

Hawai'i already has a food security issue, with 80-90% of our food imported, making it hard to find affordable locally grown food for even the most secure families. Any help the state could provide to the least of our people would be our kuleana.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Jen Lum, 'Ewa Beach

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 6:10:57 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT HB1518!

It's MUCH cheaper to feed someone than to lock them up again!

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 8:12:23 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KIMI ABBOTT-JACKSON	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill to help those returning into society after incarceration. Food is essential in any human getting a chance in life Please support this bill. Mahalo

Date: February 2, 2026

To: House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Lindsay Pacheco

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, 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 houselessness (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 houseless 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

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 8:59:17 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Courtney Pera	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Testimony in support of HB1518

Submitted by: Courtney Pera

Dear Chair Lisa Marten and Members of the Committee of Human Services and Homelessness,

My name is Courtney Pera and I am a student in the Bachelor of Social Program at UH. I am in strong support of House Bill 1518 which would offer incarcerated individuals with felony drug charges scheduled for release the opportunity to apply for the supplemental nutritional assistance program.

As it currently stands, these individuals are not eligible to apply until they have completed or are in the process of completing a treatment program. This assumes that people being released have support and a set place to live where they will have access to food before they are able to start a treatment program. This expectation is simply not reality for so many people being released from prison. According to a 2021 study by the Prison Policy Initiative, formerly incarcerated individuals are almost twice as likely as the general population to experience food insecurity. This is an already vulnerable population and this stipulation to them being able to easily access food is more inhibiting to reentry than the desire to see them go through a treatment program is helpful.

I have seen first hand a family member, with this exact conviction, struggle to get and keep a job for years. Even with familial support there is still a struggle to reach the ultimate goal of independence and structured living post release. There are so many factors a person is overwhelmed with when they exit the system but food should not be a concern. As a social work student I believe that food is a human right and that doesn't go away when someone commits a crime. The National Library of Medicine has made it clear that nutritious food is essential to

recovery from substance use disorders, SNAP benefits are a part of an already functioning system and can help support this element of recovery.

If one of the intentions when releasing individuals with drug convictions is to see them enter treatment with the goal of continued recovery, then food should be a key part of this process, not a carrot dangled in front of people.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Courtney Pera

Contact: cpera@hawaii.edu

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 10:31:58 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
emily gambino	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

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:16:33 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Representative Marten, Vice Chair Representative Olds and Members of the Committee on Human Services and Homelessness.

Please support HB 1518 which, to my understanding, would allow creation of a waiver to accept prisoner pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program applications. This bill would help both people soon to be released from prison and people already in the community.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki and life long resident of Oahu

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:53:22 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

In support of. Thank you.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:08:52 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taylor McKenzie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1518 because it closes a dangerous hunger gap at reentry. 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. By providing needed nutrients to community members who have served their time, we are making it easier to end the cycle of inmates entering and returning to the carceral punishment industry. Food insecurity after incarceration is extreme. Over 90% of people recently released from prison report food insecurity, and many go entire days without eating. Food instability increases the risk of homelessness and recidivism.

please support HB1518!

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:46:27 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laura Pokipala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Preparing incarcerated individuals for reintegration into public society is a difficult task because it assumes the individual wants to change their ways to be part of a civil system. With that said, the best rehabilitation we can provide will benefit all of society in the long run. Food insecurity is a huge barrier for all of society right now, so making it difficult for an individual reintegrating to obtain this benefit is not helpful to all of society.

I support HB 1518 to assist those individuals who truly want to change their lives away from criminality into contributing society members.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:59:07 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emma Waters	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Writing in strong support. Mahalo/

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:59:21 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Kinard	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Brandon Kinard and I am writing in support of this legislation as a individual.

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.

Please do consider supporting all of our community members.

Aloha,

Brandon Kinard

To: Hawaii State House Committee on Finance

Hearing Date/Time: Tuesday February 3, 2026, 9:00am

Place: Hawaii State Capitol, CR 329 & Videoconference

Re: Judith Ann Armstrong supports HB1518 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Dear Chair Rep. Lisa Marten, Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Olds and members of the Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

I, Judith Ann Armstrong, support HB1518 to Establish SNAP Pre-Release Enrollment Program

- **This bill closes a dangerous hunger gap at reentry.** 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.
- **Food insecurity after incarceration is extreme.** Over 90% of people recently released from prison report food insecurity, and many go entire days without eating. Food instability increases the risk of homelessness and recidivism.
- **This is an evidence-based hunger intervention.** Thirteen states have successfully implemented SNAP pre-release waivers.
- **Supporting basic needs saves taxpayer dollars.** Ensuring food access reduces reliance on emergency services, homelessness, and reincarceration, ultimately benefiting individuals saving taxpayer dollars.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith Ann Armstrong

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:06:53 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stacey Alapai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, 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,

Stacey Alapai, Maui

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:21:05 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

I, Leo Nahe, support support HB 1518!

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Rep. Terez Amato (Maui)

Hearing:

Tuesday, February 3, 2026 at 9:00 am

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Conference Room 329

Hawai'i State Capitol

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

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, Rep. Amato 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 - 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** 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

To: House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness (HSH)

Chair Rep. Lisa Marten, Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Olds, and Members: Rep. Terez Amato, Rep. Daisy Hartshfield, Rep. Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Rep. Gregg Takayama, Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Rep. David Alcos III, Rep. Diamond Garcia

Cc: Sponsors of H.B. 1518, including Primary Sponsor Rep. David A. Tarnas and Co-Sponsors Rep. Amy A. Perruso, Rep. Greggor Ilagan, Rep. Kanani Souza, Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Rep. Matthias Kusch, Rep. Tina Nakada Grandinetti.

From: Joshua Franklin

Date: 02/02/2026

Position: Support the overall intent, recommend amendments

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members,

I support the goal of H.B. 1518: reducing food insecurity at the point of reentry by creating a pre-release SNAP application process through the Department of Human Services, contingent on federal approval/waiver. Getting food support lined up before release can reduce immediate crisis, lower the temptation to fall back into harmful survival strategies, and support stability during the most fragile window of reentry. However, as written, H.B. 1518 also removes Hawai‘i’s existing treatment-linked safeguard for individuals with felony drug convictions and replaces it with a broad “regardless of treatment status” approach. That shift worries me...not because people should go hungry, but because unconditional assistance without any clear accountability framework can unintentionally undermine recovery and long-term outcomes. I have spent the last decade doing family advocacy here in Hawai‘i and I’m finishing my MSW. In that work, I’ve seen support work best when it is paired with expectations and a pathway forward. Real compassion doesn’t just hand something over; it helps people rebuild stability. If this bill is truly about recidivism reduction and healthy reentry, then the policy should be structured to encourage participation in a reentry plan...not simply remove the current guardrails and hope for the best.

Requested safeguards to strengthen H.B. 1518 (or implementation guidance/rules)

1. Link SNAP continuity to reentry engagement, not punishment

Keep access to food assistance but require a documented connection to reentry services when appropriate (for example, enrollment in a reentry case plan, benefits counseling, or a verified referral to treatment/support services). This can be framed as “coordination and engagement,” not a blanket denial.

2. Coordinate with probation/parole and reentry case management

Include a clear coordination requirement so that SNAP enrollment is paired with reentry planning (housing, treatment referral, employment readiness), and so agencies are not operating in silos.

3. Use screening + referral + follow-through (instead of unconditional removal of safeguards)

If the bill removes “treatment compliance” as an eligibility condition, it should replace it with a structured alternative: screening for needs, referral to appropriate services, and a mechanism to document participation or good-faith engagement where it applies.

4. Reporting and accountability for outcomes

Require DHS to track and report implementation results (e.g., application completion rates, time-to-benefits at release, and any measurable reentry outcomes DHS can responsibly track), so the Legislature can evaluate whether the policy is achieving stability and recidivism-reduction goals.

In closing, I support reducing food insecurity at reentry and I appreciate the intent behind H.B. 1518. I am asking you to strengthen the bill, so it promotes recovery and stability...not just access. We should never treat unconditional assistance as the only form of compassion. Compassion with structure is what leads to long-term outcomes.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Me Ke Aloha



Joshua Franklin

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 1:27:20 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

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

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.

Our 'ohana o ka pae'aina o Hawai'i is struggling greatly to put food in their mouths, and no one deserves additional barriers to that challenge.

Mahalo,

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 2:59:01 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul Kimo Pestana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SNAP benefits applications be given to pre-release prisoners.

However, I would not support SNAP benefits being given to anyone who cannot provide an address of an actual residence. SNAP benefits should only be given to people who are willing to abide by the rules of a residential program or having an actual residential property. Too many people say they are homeless at no fault of their own. However, clearly there are those who choose homelessness because they refuse drug treatment or other rules regarding residential programs. These people choose homelessness so that they can perpetuate their criminal activities. As an example there are people living on the side of Diamond Head for years. They have been victimizing residents in the area by stealing bicycles as an example. SNAP benefits should not be provided to support their criminal activities. SNAP benefits for persons willing to acclimate themselves back into society including actual residence or residential programs. No SNAP for persons who wish to continue criminal activity. Homelessness is not criminal. But stealing bicycles as an example is criminal. And if they are in prison they must have been doing something criminal.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 3:24:49 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha committee members,

Please support HB1518. This bill closes a dangerous hunger gap at reentry by allowing inmates to apply for SNAP before being released. This gives people access to food immediately upon reentry, instead of waiting weeks or months during community reintegration.

Food insecurity after incarceration is extreme. Over 90% of people recently released from prison report food insecurity, and many go entire days without eating. Food instability increases the risk of homelessness and recidivism. This is an evidence-based hunger intervention. Thirteen states have successfully implemented SNAP pre-release waivers.

Supporting basic needs saves taxpayer dollars. Ensuring food access reduces reliance on emergency services, homelessness, and helps prevent reincarceration, ultimately saving taxpayer dollars and is essential to the process of rehabilitation and healing.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1518

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:03:07 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kencho Gurung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518.

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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

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:08:54 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/3/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Toni Floerke	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.

The formerly incarcerated deserve to qualify for assistance with food and TANF, especially when they are first out of lock up and in search of housing and stabilization back in

society. More, not less, should be done to assist them, so that recidivism rates remain low, and they help make the community a better place by being in it, and not add to burdens already taking place in the streets. We need to help, not harm. Withholding food equal starvation and that is not the society that we live in and that is not the way Hawaii shares aloha.

Please vote in favor of allowing SNAP and TANF benefits to anyone who needs and qualifies for them, regardless of whether or not they were incarcerated for a drug offense.

aloha,

Toni Floerke