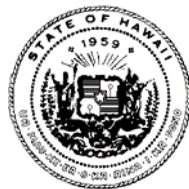


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

March 23, 2026

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

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

Hearing: March 25, 2026, Time 1:40 p.m.  
Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

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

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

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

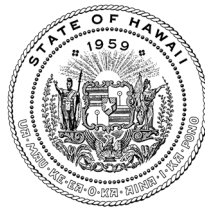
The Department will use lessons learned from this pilot to determine how and when to expand this to additional DCR facilities and whether a waiver would further enhance the

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

The Department appreciates the measure's acknowledgment (page 2, line 13) of the current process to update its benefits eligibility solution, automate tasks, expand its ability to address the needs of benefit program recipients, and consider the time required to fully implement the system statewide. We presently are 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.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII  
**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, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

by  
Tommy Johnson, Director  
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 25, 2026; 1:40 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & Via Video Conference

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee:

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

As part of DCR's ongoing efforts to increase reach in wrap around reentry services, we are currently working on a pilot program with DHS at two (2) of our facilities (Waiawa Correctional Facility and Women's Community Correctional Center) to assist those exiting our facilities to apply for SNAP benefits ten (10) days prior to their release. When inmates are engaged with services prior to their exit from our facilities, it increases their chances of successful reintegration into our communities and helps to reduce recidivism.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



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, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
(808) 587-4160

TO: The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

SUBJECT: House Bill 1518, House Draft 1, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
Hearing: Wednesday, March 25, 2026; 1:40 p.m.  
State Capitol, Room 225

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee:

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

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

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

HB1518, House Draft 1, 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, House Draft 1, 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](mailto:christin.m.johnson@hawaii.gov). Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1518 HD1**

RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Olakino a me ka Lawelawe Kanaka

(Senate Committee on Health and Human Services)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i

(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 25, 2026

1:40 PM

Lumi 225

Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

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

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

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ir_final_web_rev.pdf)

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

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

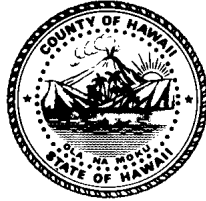
For these reasons, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs respectfully urges this Committee to **PASS HB1518 HD1**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.

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

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.  
*Mayor*

William V. Brilhante, Jr.  
*Managing Director*



Benson Medina  
*Director*

Dennis Lin  
*Deputy Director*

## County of Hawai'i

### DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

March 24, 2026  
HEARING BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Wednesday, March 25, 2026  
1:40 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 225

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

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey and Members of the Committee,

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

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

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

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

Respectfully,

Benson Medina  
Director



## HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS  
Chair

*John A. Burns School of Medicine,  
Department of Pediatrics*

Jennifer José Lo, MD  
Vice Chair

*Hawai'i Health Partners*

Titimaea Ta'ase, JD  
Secretary

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Jonathan Ching  
Kaiser Permanente

Tammy Ho  
*The Queen's Medical Center*

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*JLI Consulting*

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*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: March 20, 2026

To: Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Sen. Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Hrg: March 25, 2026 at 1:40 PM in Conference Room 225

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Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)<sup>1</sup> and the Healthy Eating, Active Living<sup>2</sup> (HEAL) coalition **supports HB 1518 HD1**, relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which by 1/1/2028, requires the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release; and allows all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefit, regardless of treatment status.

### Anti-Hunger Lifeline

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

### Benefits Begin Upon Release

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

### Formerly Incarcerated Face Extreme Rates of Food Insecurity

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> The Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, formerly known as the Obesity Prevention Task Force, was created by the legislature in 2012 and is comprised of over 60 statewide organizations. The HEAL Coalition works to make recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and health care environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents.



number of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

### Proven Successes

Currently, 13 states have adopted SNAP pre-release waivers to ensure benefits are available immediately upon release.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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

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<sup>3</sup> [Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Weekly Population Report](#), January 26, 2026

<sup>4</sup> [Prior incarceration and food insecurity trajectories through older adulthood: findings from the Health and Retirement Study](#), Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, November 2025

<sup>5</sup> [A pilot study examining food insecurity and HIV risk behaviors among individuals recently released from prison](#), AIDS education and prevention, April 2013

<sup>6</sup> [State Options Report 17th Edition](#), USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2025

<sup>7</sup> [Homelessness Following Jail Exit Among Previously Housed Individuals](#), Journal of Urban Health, October 2025



## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

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

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawai'i  
Hearing: Wednesday March 25, 2026; 1:40 PM; CR 225 or videoconference

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members, Committee on Health and Human Services:

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

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 and homelessness solutions.

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

This bill would ensure that individuals nearing release are identified and assisted with the SNAP application process **before** they return to the community. Having benefits available 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 will provide critical food stability to support lawful reintegration into our communities.

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



# COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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

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

*Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor*



## COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOMELESSNESS

Senator Joy SanBuenaventura, Chair

Senator Angus McKelvey, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 25, 2026

1:40 PM

Room 225 and VIDEOCONFERENCE

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

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai'i for almost three decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 3,633 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars<sup>1</sup> and under the "care and custody" of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation on March 6, 2026. We are always mindful that 797 of Hawai'i's imprisoned male population are serving their sentences abroad -- thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

Community Alliance on Prisons appreciates the opportunity to express our **strong support for HB 1518 HD1** that requires the Department of Human services by 1/1/2028 - upon obtaining a federal waiver - to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for incarcerated persons nearing release, including those convicted of an offense involving possession, use, or

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<sup>1</sup> DCR Weekly Population Report, March 16, 2026

[Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-03-16.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> Reentry Myth Busters

[https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/reentryMythBuster\\_snapBenefits.pdf](https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/reentryMythBuster_snapBenefits.pdf)

distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment.

We work with people who are incarcerated and so many are released with nothing – no health care and no money to jumpstart their lives in the community. We are so grateful to DHS for their tireless work to secure the 1115 Medicaid waiver for Hawai`i that allows Medicaid for people before their release and after. This allows people to connect with healthcare that is familiar to them since they had that care in the last few months of incarceration.

The importance of SNAP benefits cannot be overstated. Most people were released with nothing except for a few personal items in a garbage bag. This affords them the opportunity to purchase food since we know that so many people resort to minor crimes just to feed themselves upon release. This is really a community safety measure.

A publication by the Federal Interagency Reentry Council called “Reentry Myth Busters”<sup>2</sup> 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.

Community Alliance on Prisons hopes that Hawai`i will eliminate the ban entirely. HB 1518 HD1 would move Hawai`i to the 19<sup>th</sup> 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

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reentry and the entire community at risk. As Bob Marley has said, "A hungry man is an angry man."

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

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.

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



*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: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Re: **HB1518 HD1– Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**  
Hawaii State Capitol & Via Videoconference  
March 25, 2026, 1:40 PM

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Committee Members,

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you,

Nicole Woo  
Director of Research and Economic Policy



# HAWAII APPLESEED

## CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice  
Support for HB 1518 – Relating to SNAP  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Wednesday, March 25, 2026, at 1:40PM

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Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and members of the Committee:

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

SNAP is a critical lifeline for more than 160,000 Hawai‘i residents, supporting working families, individuals with disabilities, and others living on fixed or limited incomes.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>

<sup>2</sup> Hawai‘i Foodbank, “The State of Food Insecurity in Hawai‘i 2024-2025: Executive Summary,” Hawai‘i Foodbank, November 2025. [https://hawaiifoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HFB.ExecutiveSummary2025\\_Web-FINAL.pdf](https://hawaiifoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HFB.ExecutiveSummary2025_Web-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> 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>



**ALOHA CARE**

To: The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Hearing: Wednesday, March 25, 2026, 1:40pm, Conference Room 225

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

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

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

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

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

1357 Kapi'olani Blvd., Suite G101, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814  
Call: 808-973-0712 • Toll-free: 1-877-973-0712 • Fax: 808-973-0726 • [www.AlohaCare.org](http://www.AlohaCare.org)



Hawai'i

Committee: Health and Human Services  
Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday, March 25, 2026, at 1:40pm  
Place: Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference  
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of HB1518 HD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee:

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

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

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

We know that people entering prison are “more likely than the general population to have experienced poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and poor health.”<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>.

<sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup>

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](mailto: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.*

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<sup>3</sup> 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](https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/how-snap-can-better-serve-the-formerlyincarcerated#_ftn6).



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

TO: Committee on Health and Human Services  
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION  
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: March 25, 2026

TIME: 1:40pm

RE: HB1518 HD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
Position: Support

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

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

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



## 2026 Network Members

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

[hawaiihungeraction.org](http://hawaiihungeraction.org)

## Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 1:40PM

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

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and members of the Committee,

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

HB 1518 helps close a critical gap by allowing people to apply for SNAP before release from incarceration, ensuring access to food immediately upon reentry. Research shows that over 90% of people recently released from prison experience food insecurity, particularly in the days and weeks following release.<sup>1</sup> 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.

By removing barriers to SNAP, this measure will help ensure that people returning to our communities have the basic support they need to thrive.

Mahalo for your leadership and your consideration of HB 1518.

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

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 4:17:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Megan Fox	Testifying for Malama Kaua'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Please consider supporting this important bill which helps set up transitioning residents up for success upon release, with food security in place for them and their 'ohana. It is a benefit to our communities, society, and food systems.

Mahalo for your consideration,  
Megan Fox  
Mālama Kaua'i



March 23, 2026

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

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, I express our support for HB1518, HD1 Relating to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This bill, by 1/1/2028, requires the Department of Human Services (DHS), 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.

For over 40 years, Hawai'i Foodbank has provided daily and emergency assistance to those facing food insecurity in Hawai'i. As the state's leading hunger-relief organization, Hawai'i Foodbank distributes food to families and individuals on O'ahu and in Kaua'i County through direct service programs and through our network of 266 agency partners and pantries. Last year, we served an average of over 160,000 people each month, distributing more than 22 million pounds of nutritious food, including more than 7.1 million pounds of fresh produce.

Hawai'i Foodbank is also contracted as a SNAP outreach provider through the State. In this role, our team has seen firsthand the challenges SNAP applicants face. SNAP provides essential support to many families, but the complicated application and recertification process often causes eligible recipients to lose their benefits. Furthermore, the new changes in federal law will create even greater challenges for those trying to access this critical program.

This bill allows inmates to apply for SNAP before being released, which ensures they can access this important support system immediately upon reentry and closing a critical hunger gap.

Food security is a critical issue in Hawai'i, where one in three households lack comprehensive access to healthy, nutritious food. SNAP is one of our most important anti-hunger programs and supporting this evidence-based hunger intervention—at a timeline that is aligned with the capacity of DHS—is critical to our collective fight against hunger.

Mahalo for your consideration.

With aloha,

Amy Miller



## House Committee on Health & Human Services

### Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) **Strongly Supports**: HB1518 HD1

March 25th, 2026 at 1:40pm; Conference Room 225

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey and members of the committee,

HAPA is testifying in **support** of HB1518 HD1 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 HD1.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick,  
Executive Director



Date of Hearing: March 25, 2026

To: Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Aloha,

Hawai'i Food+ Policy is testifying in **strong support of HB 1518 HD1**. This measure will strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals by establishing a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process. The bill requires coordination with correctional facilities to identify eligible individuals prior to release, facilitates the completion and submission of SNAP applications so benefits are available immediately after release, and provides education and counseling to individuals transferring back into the community. Importantly, the bill will comply with all federal SNAP regulations and removes unnecessary barriers that prevent individuals with controlled substance convictions from enrolling in SNAP. We acknowledge the previous amendments that clarify that only SNAP benefits are fully expanded (while TANF still requires treatment compliance) and delays the law's overall effective date to July 1, 3000 instead of taking effect immediately.

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 Columbia<sup>1</sup> 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, we respectfully **urge the committee to pass HB 1518 HD1**.

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

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[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.

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 2:12:23 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

1518 HB RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 3:21:24 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

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

Mahalo for your attention.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 7:17:05 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 1:02:03 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carrie Ann Shirota	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Committee Members:

I am an attorney, justice policy 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.

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 HD! 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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Angus L. K. McKelvey, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Wednesday, March 25, 2026 at 1:40 pm  
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

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

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee,

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

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

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

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

Mahalo for all you do for your constituents,

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

Date: March 22, 2026  
To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
From: Lindsay Ann Pacheco

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee:

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

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

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

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

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

For these reasons, I strongly support HB1518 HD 1.

Mahalo for your consideration,

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

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 11:46:55 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carolyn Eaton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair SanBuenaventura, Vice ChairMcKelvey and Membersof the Committee,

My name is Carolyn Eaton. I am a resident of Honolulu and I strongly support the change this measure envisions. The change, to anticipate an individual's release from custody, return to the community, with benefits of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is tremendously significant. The gap in having food for yourself and family, or needing to rely on soup kitchens, between release and eventual employment is unnecessary and unpleasant to contemplate. There is surely a wait to be assumed between application for benefits and qualification to receive them. When this wait occurs before an individual's release date, appropriate daily sustenance post-release may be of much less concern.

A federal waiver must be obtained by our Department of Human Services to begin this humane practice for individuals pre-release, but it is an action pioneered by 18 other states before us.

Mahalo for bringing Hawaii's practice in this aspect of reentry into the community for those being released from incarceration one of greater compassion, of actual welcome.

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 3:47:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members.

Please support HB 1518 HD1. 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.

MMahalo.

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 3:51:33 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Erin Hagan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518 HD1. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

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

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

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

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

Mahalo for your consideration,

Erin Hagan

Waialua

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 4:01:30 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bianca Isaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members,

Please support HB 1518 HD1. 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.

Bianca Isaki, Kane'ohe

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 4:04:10 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I am submitting testimony in support of HB 1518 HD1. 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.

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

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 4:13:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Donna M Johnson-Elayyan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a small family farm owner, I know first-hand the challenges of accessibility to markets for locally-grown products. While there are individuals and agencies that help support local farming, many times there are roadblocks created by our very own policies.

This bill would be a welcomed supportive act to help food producers and food recipients as well. It's a simple and to the point response to a growing need and in my opinion, excellent legislation.

I fully support HB1518.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Donna Johnson-Elayyan

PO Box 88

Pepe'ekeo, HI 96783

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 4:33:23 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of. Thank you.

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 4:36:49 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Breon Michel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518 HD1. 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.

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Mahalo for your consideration,

Breon Michel, Kula HI

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 5:52:39 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristen Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518 HD1. 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.

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

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

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

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 6:01:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518 HD1. 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.

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

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

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 6:24:49 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

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

Comments:

I urge you to **support HB 1518 HD1**. 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.

Thank you

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 6:50:09 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaleiheana-a-Pohaku Stormcrow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey and Committee,

Please **support** HB 1518 HD1. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

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

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

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

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Kaleiheana Stormcrow

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 7:28:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518 HD1. 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.

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**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 8:00:07 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ruta Jordans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Establishes a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release. Helps those newly released from incarceration to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 8:37:42 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
ANDREW ISODA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518 HD1. 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.

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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.

Andrew Isoda  
Lahaina, Mau'i

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 9:26:48 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shana Laririt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill, as a Social Worker who has advocated for formerly incarcerated individuals one of the many challenges this population faces is food security, which will be a crucial component in preventing recidivism. This bill will reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 10:12:47 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services,

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

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

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

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

Mahalo for your consideration,

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 10:13:42 AM

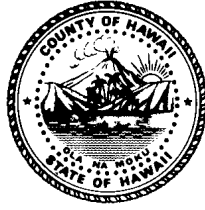
Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Raelyn Reyno Yeomans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

**Jennifer Kagiwada**  
Council Member District 2 South Hilo



Office: (808) 961-8272  
jennifer.kagiwada@hawaiicounty.gov

## HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

DATE: March 24, 2026  
TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member  
Council District 2  
SUBJECT: HB1518 HD1

Aloha Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Angus, and esteemed Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong support of HB1518 HD1**. Reentry into the community is a very vulnerable period, and no one should leave incarceration facing hunger as their first obstacle. By removing unnecessary SNAP restrictions and establishing a pre-release application process we can ensure eligible individuals can access food support immediately upon release. A recent report from the Hawai'i Food Basket identified that 43% of Hawai'i County households face difficulty in accessing sufficient food. Giving those in need access to basic nutritional necessities will strengthen stability, reduce recidivism, and support safer communities.

Mahalo,

Jenn Kagiwada

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 11:17:19 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 12:29:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518 HD1. 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.

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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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 12:39:58 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Isis Reed	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Isis Reed, I am a resident in Manoa. I strongly support HB 1518 which is designed to support the incarcerated on their path to rehabilitation. The bill addresses the food stability issues that formerly incarcerated individuals face after being released. This bill would allow people serving a sentence to apply for SNAP benefits as they are nearing their release. This would allow them to have SNAP when they are released rather than having to wait to even apply until they have been released. I believe this will help Hawai'i improve the path of reform and keep people from falling back into criminal activity because of the instabilities they face after being released.

I urge you to support this bill and its efforts to be passed.

Mahalo,

Isis Reed

**LATE**

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 2:14:16 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Naia Blasio	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518 HD1. 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.

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**LATE**

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 4:54:55 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michele Nihipali	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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Mahalo for your consideration,

Michele Nihipali

54-074 A Kam Hwy.

Hauula, HI 96717

**LATE**

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 7:10:53 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shelby Pikachu Billionaire	Testifying for Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands & Ohana Unity Party	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

**\*\*Aloha kakahiaka nui, Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee.\*\***

My name is **\*\*Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM\*\***, Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I. Chairman, Ohana Unity Party

I am submitting this testimony in advance via email because the online system has been blocking submissions. Mahalo nui loa to the Clerk's Office for your guidance. I stand before you today with a heart filled with the Aloha Spirit, in full accordance with **\*\*HRS 5-7.5 Aloha Spirit Law\*\***: "Aloha is the coordination of mind and heart within each person. It brings each person to the self. Each person must think and emote good thoughts and good feelings to others."

I offer my **\*\*strong and compassionate support\*\*** for **\*\*HB1518 HD1\*\*** — **\*A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM\***. This bill is a practical and humane step toward true rehabilitation and lokahi. It does two simple but powerful things:

1. Requires the Department of Human Services to seek a federal waiver and establish a **\*\*pre-release SNAP application process\*\*** for inmates nearing release (to be implemented by January 1, 2028).

2. Removes the current treatment-program requirement so that **\*\*all individuals\*\*** convicted of offenses involving controlled substances can apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status. Here is why this measure is urgently pono: - Food security is the foundation of stability. When people leave incarceration with no immediate access to food, the risk of recidivism rises sharply. The U.S. Department of Agriculture already offers a pre-release SNAP waiver precisely to reduce reoffending by ensuring benefits are ready upon release. Thirteen states have already implemented it — Hawai'i should join them.

- Current Hawai'i law restricts SNAP for many with past drug convictions unless they are in or have completed treatment. This creates unnecessary barriers when treatment programs are limited or unavailable. Twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia have fully opted out of this disqualification. HB1518 HD1 brings us in line with best practices while still respecting federal rules.

- The Department of Human Services is already upgrading its systems, and this bill gives them time (until 2028) to prepare. No new state funds are required — it simply removes obstacles so people returning to our communities can focus on rebuilding their lives instead of wondering where their next meal will come from.

- For our Native Hawaiian ‘ohana and others disproportionately impacted by the justice system, this bill supports reentry with dignity and reduces the cycle of poverty and re-incarceration.

**\*\*He ali‘i ka ‘āina, he kauwā ke kanaka\*\*** — The land is the chief, the people are the servants. This legislation lives that teaching by helping returning citizens become contributing members of our ‘ohana rather than burdens on our systems. True justice includes giving people the basic tools — starting with food — to succeed upon release.

I urge you to pass **\*\*HB1518 HD1\*\*** so that Hawai‘i can lead with aloha in supporting successful reentry and stronger, healthier communities. **\*\*E ho‘omaika‘i kākou\*\*** — Let us give thanks together for a bill that nourishes hope and reduces harm while honoring the Aloha Spirit.

Mahalo nui loa for your kuleana and for receiving this testimony.

**\*\*Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM\*\*** Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I.  
Chairman, Ohana Unity Party [www.Ohanaunityparty.com](http://www.Ohanaunityparty.com) [Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com](mailto:Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com)

**LATE**

**HB-1518-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 8:13:41 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2026 1:40:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alice Abellanida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. Please vote yes.



**LATE**

PO Box 4, Kunia, Hawaii, 96759 || 808-622-9026 || [www.agstewardshiphawaii.org](http://www.agstewardshiphawaii.org)

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March 25, 2026

Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Senate on Health and Human Services,

**Re: Support for HB1518 HD1 Relating To The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

On behalf of **Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i**, we support **HB1518 HD1**, which strengthens food security for individuals reentering the community after incarceration and expands access to SNAP benefits for people with past controlled-substance convictions.

Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i leads the [Statewide Food Systems Coordination Initiative \(HSFSC\) initiative](#), launched in 2024 with philanthropic and gubernatorial support. The initiative works to align agricultural stakeholders, address infrastructure barriers, secure federal resources, advance institutional procurement of local food, and support policy priorities that strengthen Hawai'i's food system. HB1518 HD1 directly aligns with this work by addressing the fact that [90% of formerly incarcerated people](#) experience food insecurity and developing pathways to SNAP access strengthens food security for people leaving incarceration.

This bill does two things: (1) it **allows SNAP applications to be submitted before release so benefits are available immediately**, and (2) it **expands SNAP eligibility for anyone with a controlled-substance conviction**, ensuring fair access to nutrition support programs

Since about 95% of people incarcerated eventually return to the community, and this bill helps expand and streamline access to nutrition for everyone in our communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Dr. Amanda Shaw, PhD, Statewide Food Systems Coordinator  
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O'ahu Resource Conservation and Development Council, a 501c3 Nonprofit Corporation*



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