



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Agriculture and Human Resilience
and

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 2233 HD1 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM-EDUCATION PROGRAM

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on the HB 2233 HD1 which appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) and the Department of Health (DOH) to continue their implementation of the Hawai'i Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education Program (SNAP-Ed).

Over 30% of Hawai'i's families are food insecure according to the 2025 Hawai'i Food Bank Survey. Food and nutritional security are critical for children's health, positive youth development, student learning, worker productivity, and resilience of families and communities. Helping families become food and nutritionally secure through enhancing access and improving knowledge about healthy diets, cooking and culturally-appropriate recipes is one of CTAHR's key missions.

In this effort, the Department of Health and Human Services had two implementing agencies - CTAHR and DOH, which collaborated since the establishment of the federal SNAP-Ed program. However, the discontinuation of the program has resulted in the loss of 13 community-trusted nutrition educators at CTAHR, further increasing the risk to nutritional security, children's health, and resilience of families. To build a sustainable approach to these persistent challenges and to uproot food and nutritional insecurity, CTAHR is building a Human and Community Resilience Institute that will take a data-driven and community-based approach in collaboration with governmental and non-profit organizations.

In conclusion, there is an urgent need for community nutrition education programs for a food secure and healthy Hawai'i. The appropriations in the bill will support community nutrition education assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'

KENNETH FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
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STATE OF HAWAII
EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON AGING
NO. 1 CAPITOL DISTRICT
250 SOUTH HOTEL STREET, SUITE 406
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2831

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2233 HD1
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM-
EDUCATION PROGRAM

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

Testimony of Caroline Cadirao
Director, Executive Office on Aging
Attached Agency to the Department of Health

Hearing: Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 2:00 P.M., Conference Room 309

1 **EOA's Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department
2 of Health supports the intent of HB2233 HD1 and offers comments. EOA requests that this
3 program and appropriation not conflict with, reduce, or replace priorities identified in the
4 executive budget.

5 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure appropriates funds for FY 2026–2027 to the University of
6 Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience and to the Department of Health
7 to continue implementing the Hawai'i Supplemental Nutrition Assistance – Education (SNAP-
8 Ed) Program.

9 **Purpose and Justification:** Federal funding for SNAP-Ed was eliminated. This measure seeks
10 to restore critical funding for an evidence-based program that provides nutrition education and
11 obesity prevention, helping families and older adults maximize their SNAP benefits.

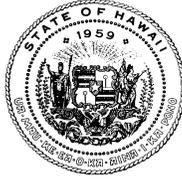
1 SNAP-Ed teaches skills for healthy meal preparation, food budgeting, and encourages physically
2 active lifestyles. The program also includes a Farm to School component, connecting children to
3 farming and local agriculture.

4 Restoring funding will ensure continued access to these essential services that promote food
5 security and healthier communities for families, children, and older adults.

6 **Recommendation:** EOA supports the intent of this measure and defers to the University of
7 Hawai‘i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience and the Department of Health
8 for implementation.

9

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 2233, H.D. 1
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM-EDUCATION PROGRAM**

REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW TAKUYA GARRETT, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Hearing Date: February 18, 2026

Room Number: Conference Room 309
and Videoconference

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (DOH) defers to the priorities of the Governor's
2 Executive Budget request for fiscal implications.
- 3 **Department Position:** The DOH supports House Bill 2233, House Draft 1 (H.B. 2233, H.D. 1) that
4 appropriates funds to the University of Hawaii, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human
5 Resilience (UH-CTAHR) and the DOH for the continued implementation of the Supplemental
6 Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) program.
- 7 **Department Testimony:** SNAP-Ed is an evidence-based program to promote healthy eating and
8 healthy lifestyles among low-income populations. The program's goal is to improve the
9 likelihood that persons eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or
10 other people with low income, will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and
11 choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the 2020-2025 [Dietary Guidelines for](#)
12 [Americans](#) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) food guidance.

13 In Hawaii, the SNAP-Ed program is led by two implementing agencies, the UH-CTHAR
14 provides direct nutrition education services, and the DOH provides the support and

1 implementation of policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes. The SNAP-Education program
2 adopts comprehensive multi-level and public health approaches for its projects and initiatives,
3 encompassing evidence-based direct education, community interventions, changes in PSE, and
4 multi-sector collaborations and partnerships. SNAP-Education activities impact all sectors of
5 society—including SNAP-Education eligible individuals and families, communities, and organizations,
6 small and large businesses, and policy makers. SNAP-Education outcomes demonstrate positive
7 impacts, with 91% of participants improving their diets, 83% of participants gaining skills in
8 meal planning and budgeting and 40% reporting increased food affordability of sufficient food
9 for their families.¹

10 People in Hawaii face unique and persistent challenges related to food access, cost of
11 living, and health equity. Residents experience some of the highest food prices in the nation,
12 and communities across the state, particularly in rural areas and on neighbor islands, continue
13 to experience disparities in access to affordable, nutritious food and opportunities to be
14 physically active. The SNAP-Education program, and the community partners it supports, directly
15 address these challenges by delivering culturally responsive, community-based PSE changes,
16 and nutrition education that relies on the local food systems, tradition and lived realities.

17 An example of a successful DOH SNAP-Education program is the establishment of Food Access
18 Coordinator's (FACs) in each county along with additional coordinators in Waianae and Molokai
19 for a total of six across the state. The FACs are developing networks of food system
20 stakeholders, building a shared understanding of each county's food systems, and improving
21 access to locally produced foods for residents facing food insecurity. SNAP-Education initiatives also
22 support PSE strategies in schools, community organizations and local settings. These efforts

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2024). Hawaii SNAP-Education State Impact Reports. Retrieved January 30, 2026, from SNAP Education Connection website: <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/library/materials/hawaii-snap-ed-state-impact-reports>

1 contribute to healthier food environments and reinforce long-term, sustainable changes across
2 communities statewide.

3 The DOH supports H.B. 2233, H.D. 1 that would fund the continued implementation of
4 the SNAP-Ed program as an effective, evidence-based tool that improves health outcomes,
5 supports families, and contributes to a healthier future for Hawaii.

6 **Offered Amendments:** None

7 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII

Executive Office on Early Learning

Ke'ena Ho'okele Ho'ona'auao Pae Kamali'i o Hawai'i Moku'aina
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

TO: Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair
House Committee on Higher Education

FROM: Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 2233, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL
NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM-EDUCATION PROGRAM.

Committee: HED
Date/Time: Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 2:00 p.m.
Location: Conference Room 309

Executive Office on Early Learning's Position: **SUPPORT**

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of H.B. 2233, H.D. 1 and defers to the University of Hawai'i and the Department of Health regarding implementation and funding.

This measure aligns with the Early Learning Board's current framework of policy priorities, which is grounded in the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan. Specifically, the bill advances State Plan Building Block 1: Keiki and 'Ohana Health, Safety, and Well-Being by supporting programs that increase opportunities for physical activity and nutrition and promote early childhood health.

The Hawai'i Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program–Education (SNAP-Ed) supports parents and early childhood providers in building foundations for the lifelong health of Hawai'i's children. The program helps adults make healthier choices for themselves and their families and encourages early care and learning providers to integrate evidence-based nutrition, physical activity, and healthy habits into their programs. Maintaining these services in the absence of federal funding will ensure continued support for the health and well-being of our keiki during this critical period of growth and development.

We appreciate the Legislature's ongoing investment and shared commitment to strengthening Hawai'i's early learning system for our youngest keiki and their 'ohana. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments in support of H.B. No. 2233, H.D. 1.



HAWAII APPLESEED
CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for HB 2233 – Relating to The SNAP-Ed Program
House Committee on Higher Education
Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2233, which would support services formerly funded by the federal SNAP-Ed program.

Hawai‘i Appleseed is committed to advancing an equitable food system in Hawai‘i, where all residents have access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally significant foods. We support HB 2233, as it provides critical funding to the University of Hawai‘i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (UH CTAHR) and the Department of Health for the continuation of the SNAP-Ed Program. This critical funding was eliminated by Congress’ passage of H.R. 1 also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.¹

SNAP Ed has shown lasting impact in Hawai‘i for a relatively small price tag. For approximately \$1.6 million annually, the program directly supports two parallel pathways for improving food security for vulnerable populations across Hawai‘i. UH CTAHR’s portion of the funding supports direct nutrition education, including meal planning and budgeting, reading nutrition labels, and preparing healthy foods at home. Data from direct education classes show that the program delivers tangible results—improving diet quality, building practical budgeting and meal-planning skills, and enabling families to afford more food without increasing their monthly budget.²

The funding also supports Hawai‘i’s network of Food Access Coordinators—positions that have been critical in coordinating a variety of food access and disaster response initiatives in their respective communities and counties in recent years.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to fully fund HB 2233 to ensure the ongoing success of SNAP-Ed in Hawai‘i. This small investment will make a large impact in the health and well-being of Hawai‘i’s families, and we appreciate the opportunity to support this important measure.

¹ Section 10107 of *Public Law 119-21* (the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025*) amends Section 28(d)(1) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 by ending required funding for the SNAP Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program (SNAP-Ed) with the FY 2025 grant allocation; unexpended FY 2025 funds may be used in FY 2026 to operate SNAP-Ed but mandatory funding thereafter is eliminated.

² UH SNAP-Ed program serving ‘ohana, keiki and kūpuna threatened by federal cuts,” *Maui Now*, June 9, 2025.



HIPHI Board

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Chair

John A. Burns School of Medicine,
Department of Pediatrics

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Vice Chair

Hawai'i Health Partners

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University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Dina Shek, JD
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For Children in Hawai'i

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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: February 15, 2026

To: Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Higher Education

Re: Support for HB 2233 HD1, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition
Program-Education Program

Hrg: February 18, 2026, at 2:00 pm, Conference Room 309

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating + Active Living² (HEAL) Statewide Coalition are in **support of HB 2233 HD1**, which appropriates state funds to the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience and the Department of Health to continue implementation of Hawai'i's SNAP-Ed program.

SNAP is a Lifeline

In Hawai'i, where families face some of the highest food costs in the nation, nutrition education and practical food budgeting skills are essential tools for health and stability. 1 in 3 households in Hawai'i face food insecurity.³ Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are a lifeline to many of these residents. Local families in need receive over \$600 million annually in SNAP benefits.⁴ These high food insecurity levels are directly linked to Hawai'i's extremely high cost of living and disproportionate food costs, which force families to choose between food and other essentials like rent and utilities, a reality that persists even among working households.

Improving Tools for Healthy Nutrition

SNAP-Ed addresses these urgent household challenges by equipping families with practical, culturally responsive nutrition education and food

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

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

³ The State of Food Insecurity in Hawai'i - Hawai'i Food Bank.

https://hawaiiifoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/HawaiiFoodbank_TheStateOfFoodInsecurityInHawaii_2023.pdf

⁴ Hawai'i Department of Human Services.

<https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SFY-2024-SUMMARY-apr.pdf>



budgeting skills, which strengthen food security and improve dietary quality. These outcomes align closely with the priorities identified in the Hawai'i Physical Activity & Nutrition (PAN) Plan 2030, which emphasizes increasing access to healthy food as part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce obesity, chronic disease, and health disparities statewide. The PAN Plan's long-term goals include reducing chronic disease burden and increasing healthy eating opportunities for low-income residents and priority populations.⁵

With federal SNAP-Ed funding now eliminated, state investment is essential to continue these critical services. Without sustained funding, we risk losing a cornerstone preventive program that helps families manage high living costs, improve health behaviors, and reduce avoidable healthcare burdens.

Please support this measure to ensure SNAP-Ed remains available as a vital public health and food security intervention in Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

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

Nate Hix
Director of Policy and Advocacy

⁵ Hawai'i Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan 2030, Hawai'i State Department of Health Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division. https://hhsp.hawaii.gov/assets/pdf/HHSP_PAN_Plan_WEB.pdf



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Executive Officers

Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp., *Chair*
Jayson Watts, Mahi Pono, *Vice Chair*
Jill Tamura, Tamura Super Market, *Secretary/Treas.*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *President and Executive Director*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, Odom, *Advisor*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Advisor*
Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Higher Education
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 18, 2026

TIME: 2pm

RE: HB2233 HD1 Relating to Public Assistance

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 to appropriate funds to the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) and the Department of Health (DOH) to continue their implementation of the Hawai'i Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—Education Program.

As the measure notes, “the federal supplemental nutrition assistance program—education (SNAP—Ed) program, active from 1992 until its discontinuation in 2025, was a critical, evidence-based program that directly improved the health and well-being of low-income families. SNAP-Ed provided essential nutrition education, promoted healthy eating, improved cooking and budgeting skills, and expanded access to nutritious foods.”

Ensuring that Hawaii residents have access to information about healthy eating, and supporting programs like DA BUX that make fresh local food more affordable are the best ways to ensure that SNAP users can make healthy choices for themselves and their families.

We urge the committee to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

TESTIMONY ON HB 2233, HD1
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM-
EDUCATION PROGRAM

Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice-Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 2233, HD1, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) and the Department of Health (DOH) to continue their implementation of the Hawai'i Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program–Education Program.

HB 2233, HD1 underscores the importance of strengthening community resilience through education, coordination, and capacity-building. These efforts are important to supporting communities, food systems, and long-term sustainability across Hawai'i.

From an agricultural perspective, resilience is closely tied to the strength of our local food system, our agricultural workforce, and the institutions that support farmers, families, and communities. CTAHR has long played a critical role in these efforts through its research, extension, education, and community-based programs. CTAHR's existing partnerships with farmers, ranchers, community organizations, schools, and state agencies provide a strong foundation for advancing the objectives outlined in this measure.

As this measure moves forward, we respectfully encourage continued coordination with CTAHR's existing initiatives to ensure alignment, efficiency, and effective use of resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

SUPPORT FOR HB 2233 HD1: RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM-EDUCATION PROGRAM

TO: House Committee on Higher Education

FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: Wednesday, February 18, 2026; 2:00 PM; CR 309 or Videoconference

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members, Committee on Higher Education:

I am Betty Lou Larson with Catholic Charities Hawaii. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 2233 HD1**, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawaii (UH) College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience and the Department of Health (DOH) to continue their implementation of the Hawaii Supplemental Assistance Program (SNAP) - Education Program

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

This program brings basic food budgeting and food preparation skills to people receiving SNAP benefits. This program is especially valuable to young parents who may be buying and preparing food for their families for the first time. Many kids may have grown up on fast foods. This is an opportunity to learn healthier habits. This program of nutritional education can help to improve both health and reduce obesity.

We are truly thankful to the UH and DOH for their efforts to sustain this program since it has been eliminated from the federal budget. This has created a significant gap in nutritional education. This program has been active since 1992 and has been a critical, evidence-based program that has directly improved the health of low-income families. This SNAP education program would provide essential nutrition education, promote healthy eating, improve cooking and budget skills and even expand access to nutritional foods. It is a **Win-Win situation for the families and our State** to promote the life-long health of families, reduce food insecurity, and reduce long-term public health costs.

Catholic Charities Hawaii thank the Legislature for the opportunity to testify on this important measure. We respectfully urge your support for this bill and the numerous positive impacts that it will provide to our SNAP families in Hawaii.

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





2026 Network Members

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

hawaiihungeraction.org

House Committee on Higher Education

Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 2:00PM

RE: Support for HB 2233, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education Program

Dear Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Hunger Action Network, a coalition of more than twenty local organizations with the mission to advocate for food security for Hawai'i households, would like to express support for HB 2233, which would support services formerly funded by the federal SNAP-Ed program.

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. Beyond the benefit itself, education and community-based support are equally essential to supporting families struggling with Hawai'i's high cost of living.

SNAP-Ed provides essential programs that can improve dietary habits, support local agriculture, and reduce food insecurity, particularly among children, kūpuna, and low-income households. By appropriating funds to the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience and the Department of Health, HB 2233 makes up for the critical funding that was lost during last year's sweeping federal cuts. This funding also sustains Hawai'i's network of Food Access Coordinators, who play a vital role in connecting communities to nutrition resources and coordinating food access and disaster response efforts across the state.

Mahalo for your leadership and your consideration of HB 2233. Funding SNAP-Ed is key to providing nutrition education, outreach, and resources to those most in need.

With aloha,
Hawai'i Hunger Action Network membership

To: Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
Representative Terez Amato, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Higher Education

Fr: Ms. Janel Fujinaka, Makiki Resident / At-Large Board Member
Neighborhood Board Makiki – Tantalus – Papakōlea – Punchbowl

Re: Testimony on H.B. 2233 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION
ASSISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM (Strong Support)

Committee: HED
Date/Time: February 18, 2026, 2:00 PM
Location: Conference Room 309

February 14, 2026

Aloha Chair Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice-Chair Terez Amato, and Committee Members,

My name is Janel Fujinaka. I am a resident of Makiki and serve as an at-large Makiki Neighborhood Board member. I submit this testimony as a private citizen in **strong support of HB2233** because nutrition education is critical to the health, stability, and dignity of working families in our community.

Across Hawai'i, food insecurity remains a serious issue. According to the Hawaii Foodbank, **nearly one in three households in the state struggles with food insecurity**. That means hundreds of thousands of our neighbors are making impossible choices between rent, utilities, transportation, and groceries.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program plays a vital role in keeping families fed. More than **160,000 Hawai'i residents rely on SNAP each month**, including working parents, Kūpuna on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, and families with young children. These are not abstract numbers; they represent the people we see every day in apartment buildings, bus stops, schools, and small businesses throughout Makiki.

Our neighborhood is home to many renters, seniors, immigrants, and service-industry workers. Many households are living paycheck to paycheck in one of the most expensive urban areas in the country. Rising grocery prices and housing costs have made it even harder for families to afford nutritious food.

That is why SNAP-Ed is so important. The program does more than provide food assistance; it teaches families practical, real-world skills to stretch every dollar. Program data shows that:

- **91% of participants improved their diets**
- **83% gained meal planning and budgeting skills**
- **40% reported improved food affordability or having enough food for their families**

These are meaningful, measurable outcomes. SNAP-Ed helps families make healthier choices, reduces the risk of diet-related illnesses, and builds long-term self-sufficiency. It also reduces pressure on food banks, hospitals, and other social services, making it a smart investment for the state.

In a community like Makiki, where many residents are working hard just to stay afloat, programs like SNAP-Ed provide both immediate relief and long-term stability. They help parents feed their children, support Kūpuna aging in place, and strengthen the overall health of our neighborhood.

HB2233 supports a proven, cost-effective program that uplifts working families and builds healthier communities across Hawai'i.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to **pass HB2233**.



Ms. Janel S. Fujinaka
Makiki Resident
Makiki Neighborhood Board At-Large Member

HB-2233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 4:20:50 AM

Testimony for HED on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deven English	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong opposition of this bill, there is a reason why it snap funding was cut, outright fraudulent abuse of the system.

HB-2233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:33:39 AM

Testimony for HED on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT

HB-2233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:14:59 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

SNAP-Ed is a proven, helpful, and much needed program that deserves to be funded.

HB-2233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:51:50 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
jeanne wheeler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha: please pass this important bill - Mahalo, JW

HB-2233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 1:23:36 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
H. Doug Matsuoka	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of HB2233 Re SNAP-Ed, namely, the restoration of funding for Hawaii’s very enduring and effective SNAP-Ed program at the University of Hawaii’s CTAHR (College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience).

I found this program after qualifying for SNAP myself. I retired in 2024 at the age of 72 and last year I discovered I qualified for SNAP benefits. I’m a member of the senior advocacy group, Kokua Council (and a former Director).

I went looking for ways to optimize my benefits and found the “Food to Grow” program which is about buying seeds and seedlings with your EBT and growing your own food. Although the website was still up and its resources were still available, I found that the program itself had been terminated.

I just want to point out a few things concerning the program and its connection with the University of Hawaii:

- Although emanating from the University of Hawaii, the program reached out into the community. They ran programs for seniors and “Farm to School” programs which would show kids at school how to cultivate and prepare vegetables.
- The programs were State-wide and it partnered with organizations such as Catholic Charities, Lanakila Pacific, Sustainable Molokai, Maui Hub, DaBox in Hilo, Malama Kauai and many other organizations.
- Partnerships with large organizations like the YMCA of Honolulu (which serves all of Hawaii) allowed them to program projects with their wide network of YMCA’s
- Likewise, their partnerships included large entities like the Hawaii Library System, the Hawaii Department of Education, and the Hawaii Public Library System.
- They did not limit themselves to large networks and reached out to individual organizations like local churches, nonprofits, and senior organizations.

Please restore the Hawaii SNAP-Ed program. It clearly effectively serves the public good.

H. Doug Matsuoka
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