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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
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Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 15, 2026

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

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 3245 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

Hearing: February 18, 2026, Time 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

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

This bill requires DHS to adjust the minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit households and participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP). Participation shall include the following:

- (1) Establishing recertification periods of at least thirty-six months for households composed entirely of adults sixty years of age or older or adults with disabilities; and
- (2) Waiving the recertification interview for eligibility households, to the extent allowed by federal law.

In addition to implementing SNAP changes required by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), Public Law 119-21, DHS is currently testing its replacement eligibility system, the Benefits Eligibility Solution (BES), with piloting scheduled for October 2026, followed by a statewide rollout in February 2027. Once operational, BES will be able to support the option

granted to states to extend the certification period for SNAP households aged sixty years or older from twelve (12) months to twenty-four (24) months without a waiver.

DHS respectfully requests that, if the bill moves forward, an amendment be added to set a distant effective date after BES is operational. For DHS to extend certifications beyond 12 months prior to the conclusion of the BES statewide rollout, it would require a manual process due to limitations in the Department’s legacy eligibility system, which does not support automating certifications longer than 12 months. However, DHS has observed that implementing a new manual process increases payment errors. Importantly, due to fiscal changes in OBBBA, DHS must minimize payment errors, as higher payment error rates pose financial risk to the State. DHS prefers to avoid manual processes to the extent possible.

For the committee’s information, beginning in federal fiscal year 2028 and continuing annually, OBBBA authorized a new cost-share model for SNAP benefits tied to payment error rates. Specifically, states with a payment error rate of 6% or higher, based on their payment error rate from either federal fiscal year 2025 or 2026 (states choose which year's error rate to use as the baseline), will be required to state-fund a percentage of total SNAP benefits.

Hawaii currently issues roughly \$660 million in SNAP benefits annually. Using this annual amount as an estimate, the percentage tiering for Hawaii would be the following:

Table 1. Cost Share for SNAP Benefits by payment error rate, beginning federal fiscal year 2028.

Payment Error Rate	Cost Share for SNAP Benefits	
	% of State Cost Share for SNAP	Est. Annual Amount to be paid by Hawaii
<6%	0%	\$0
6-7.99%	5%	\$33,000,000
8-9.99%	10%	\$66,000,000
10% or above	15%	\$99,000,000

For the federal fiscal year 2024, DHS had a payment error rate of 6.68%. This is the most recent official and final federal fiscal year error rate published by the United States Department of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Services. DHS achieved this by streamlining and solidifying certain processes, thereby stabilizing the overall eligibility process. Although we continue to work to lower the payment error rate, some OBBBA changes took effect on July 4, 2025, the date OBBBA was signed, and we anticipate payment errors.

DHS respectfully requests that, should this measure move forward, an effective date of July 1, 2028, be considered. This will give DHS time to prioritize efforts to lowering the payment error rate, adjust to the BES system, and assess the impact, if any, of another OBBBA change that expanded the population of SNAP recipients (previously ages 18-54, now OBBBA 18-64) required to comply with the SNAP Able-Bodied Adults without Dependent Children (ABAWD) work requirements. DHS will need time to analyze the OBBBA changes in operations and the resources needed to implement ESAP.

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



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for SB 3245 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 1:00 PM

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **SB 3245**, which would require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to adjust the minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits households, participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP), and report to the Legislature.

SNAP is a critical lifeline for more than 160,000 Hawai‘i residents. Without it, many of these individuals would not have any money to pay for food at all. Since benefits are federally funded, federal rules require tedious paperwork and documentation both upon initial application and for periodic recertification.¹ Some SNAP users lose these crucial benefits during the recertification process, despite no changes to eligibility. This phenomenon, known as “churn,” adds significantly to the administrative burden of administering SNAP at the state level.

This bill would provide some relief for the churn issue. Federal rules allow states to extend the SNAP certification period to for households with seniors or people with disabilities. However, Hawai‘i currently requires recertification every 12 months for most households, with just a six-month “interim report.” Using the ESAP waiver, the recertification period can be up to 36 months. In addition to the three-year certification period, this waiver allows those who are 60+ to waive the recertification interview and allows for a simplified application process. As of 2024, 23 other states have already implemented ESAP and there are more to follow suit.²

The proposed extended certification periods for most households have twofold benefits, reducing workload for both applicants and eligibility staff. We have a unique opportunity to ease the burden on both sides of the application process. Thank you for considering these comments in your deliberation of SB 3245.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, “SNAP Data Tables: National and/or State Level Monthly and/or Annual Data,” Food and Nutrition Service, 2024. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

² U.S. Department of Agriculture, “SNAP State Options Report,” Food and Nutrition Service, 2024, p. 26. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-16th-state-options-report-june24.pdf>



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The State Legislature
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Wednesday, February 18, 2026
Conference Room 225, 1:00 p.m.

TO: The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
FROM: Kealii Lopez, AARP State Director
RE: Support for S.B.3245, Relating to SNAP

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keali'i Lopez and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social impact organization that advocates for individuals age 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and nearly 135,000 in Hawaii. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families.

AARP Hawaii supports S.B. 3245 because it will significantly improve access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for older adults, a population that faces disproportionately high rates of food insecurity.

SNAP is the nation's largest anti-hunger program and currently supports more than 11 million adults ages 50 and older nationwide, providing essential monthly benefits that help low-income seniors afford nutritious food. Research from AARP shows that more than 9 million older adults experience food insecurity, making SNAP an especially critical resource for older populations.

For Hawai'i—where the cost of living is among the highest in the nation—these national trends are even more pronounced. Many kūpuna rely on fixed incomes and face increased barriers to maintaining consistent access to food. Simplifying SNAP enrollment and reducing administrative burdens is one of the most effective ways to increase participation among eligible older adults. Simplifying application and recertification processes leads to higher enrollment among seniors, which directly reduces hunger and supports health and independence.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

SB-3245

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:00:12 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

****Testimony in Strong Support of SB3245 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program****

Aloha kakou, Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM, Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I., Chairman of the Ohana Unity Party. Aloha nui loa from the heart of our islands, where we live guided by ****aloha****—love, compassion, kindness, and grace—and where ****‘ohana**** means we care for every member, young and old, as the ‘ōlelo no‘eau reminds us: ****‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai. Kōkua aku, kōkua mai. Pēlā ka nohona ‘ohana.**** “Observe others, be observed. Help others, be helped. That is the way of family life.” Today, I stand in full support of SB3245 to urge its swift passage, embodying this spirit by making SNAP—our vital food assistance program—more accessible, less burdensome, and truly mālama for our kupuna and families facing hardship.

This bill directs the Department of Human Services (DHS) to take practical, compassionate steps: set minimum certification periods for SNAP households to ****12 months**** (with ****24 months**** minimum for households where all adults are 60 years or older); fully participate in the federal ****Elderly Simplified Application Project**** (ESAP) to simplify eligibility for seniors and disabled individuals, including ****at least 36-month recertification periods**** for households of adults 60+ or with disabilities, and waiving recertification interviews where federal law allows; seek necessary federal approvals or waivers; update rules, policies, and procedures accordingly; and submit detailed reports to the Legislature before the 2029 and 2030 sessions on implementation, participation, costs, and outcomes. In our Hawaiian way, we know ****ua ola loko i ke aloha****—“love gives life within”—and that true healing and strength come from supporting one another without unnecessary hardship.

SNAP is a lifeline for thousands of Hawaii families struggling with our high cost of living—where groceries, rent, and utilities strain budgets to the breaking point. Yet frequent recertifications create red tape: missed deadlines lead to benefit gaps, administrative burdens overwhelm DHS staff, and vulnerable kupuna face stress from repeated interviews and paperwork. This bill reduces that burden, extends stability, and encourages higher participation—ensuring more keiki, kupuna, and ‘ohana get the nutritious food they need to thrive.

Nationally and in Hawaii, simplified processes like ESAP have proven effective: they boost enrollment among eligible seniors (who often under-participate due to complexity), cut administrative costs, and maintain program integrity through federal oversight. Hawaii's kupuna deserve dignity—no one should go hungry or lose benefits over paperwork when we can mālama them better. This measure aligns with **kuleana**—our responsibility to care for our community—and supports aloha ʻāina by helping families afford healthy foods grown and shared in our islands.

In closing, with deepest aloha and a firm call to mālama our ʻohana—especially our elders who have given so much—I respectfully ask the Committee to pass SB3245 without delay. Key reasons include:

- **Minimum 12-month certification** for all SNAP households, and **24 months** for all-adult-60+ households—providing longer stability and reducing unnecessary renewals that cause benefit interruptions.

- Full participation in the **Elderly Simplified Application Project**, with **36-month recertification** for seniors and disabled households, plus waived interviews where allowed—simplifying access for those who need it most and cutting red tape.
- Required federal waivers and policy updates to implement these changes smoothly, plus transparent reports in 2029 and 2030 on participation rates, cost savings, and household impacts—ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

- True embodiment of Hawaiian values: **aloha**, **ʻohana**, **mālama**, and **kōkua aku, kōkua mai**—helping our vulnerable without burden, so no kupuna or family goes hungry while we have the means to support them.

- A smart, low-cost administrative fix that increases food security, reduces DHS workload over time, and honors our commitment to care for every member of our island family.

Mahalo nui loa for your kuleana in this vital work. I am available for any questions and urge you to pass SB3245—let us show the power of aloha by feeding our people with dignity and ease.

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I. Ohana Unity Party, Chairman www.Ohanaunityparty.com Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com F



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

RE: Support for SB 3245 Relating To The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Hrg: Wednesday, February 18, 2025, at 1:00 PM, Conference Room 225

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating, Active Living² (HEAL) coalition is in **support of SB 3245**, which requires the Department of Human Services to adjust the minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for households, and would participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project.

One in three households in Hawai'i faces food insecurity. 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. Unfortunately, the state has made accessing these benefits incredibly difficult. The state needs to improve the enrollment process and ensure local SNAP-eligible residents can receive the federal benefits they need.

Short Certification Periods

Residents in Hawai'i face frequent SNAP recertification requirements, with some needing to re-certify as often as every six months. Kūpuna (60 years and over) are required to recertify annually, even though federal regulations permit them to do so only once every three years.³

Hawai'i has the opportunity to extend SNAP certification periods to the federal maximum for all recipients. This change would significantly reduce the paperwork burden on families and kūpuna, easing stress and administrative challenges.

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 USDA - SNAP State Options Report.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/waivers/state-options-report>



Importantly, it would also reduce the risk of losing benefits during the recertification process, a common issue caused by paperwork difficulties and bureaucratic barriers. By adopting this policy, Hawai'i can ensure more consistent access to essential food assistance for its residents.

Decreased Workload for SNAP Staff

Hawai'i's SNAP department faces overwhelming demand for its services, yet it lacks sufficient staffing to meet that demand effectively. By reducing the frequency of recertification, the department can significantly decrease its administrative workload.

This would free up valuable resources and allow staff to focus on improving the overall efficiency and accessibility of both the SNAP application and recertification processes. Streamlining these operations would benefit not only the department but also the thousands of residents who rely on SNAP for essential food assistance.

Extended Certifications can be Implemented with New Benefits Eligibility System This Fall

We are excited for the new eligibility system to launch this fall which can accommodate extending certification periods. This will streamline the process for both DHS staff and the SNAP applicants.

Please extend the SNAP certification periods to ensure we're doing everything we can to make SNAP as accessible as possible. Mahalo for your consideration.

Mahalo,

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

Nate Hix
Director of Policy and Advocacy



February 13, 2026

**Testimony in Support of S.B.3245
Relating to The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

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

Aloha United Way supports this measure to extend SNAP certification periods and implement the Elderly Simplified Application Project.

In Hawai'i, approximately 40% of households are below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold. These are working families who earn above the federal poverty level but still cannot afford basic necessities. Too often, food is one of the first expenses reduced when budgets are strained. For many of these households, SNAP is not optional; it is essential economic infrastructure that keeps food on the table and prevents deeper crises.

Extending certification periods reduces unnecessary administrative churn for both participants and the Department of Human Services. Families and kūpuna who currently navigate frequent paperwork, interviews, and recertifications just to maintain basic nutrition support should be prioritized for simplified access, not burdened with additional bureaucracy. Streamlining the process helps eligible households stay connected to benefits and reduces interruptions caused by missed deadlines or complex requirements.

For older adults and people with disabilities, longer certification periods and waived interviews recognize the realities of fixed incomes, mobility challenges, and health concerns. These changes promote dignity, stability, and consistent access to food, while also improving administrative efficiency.

When households can rely on stable food assistance, they are better able to stay housed, maintain employment, and remain healthy. This bill is a practical, cost-effective step toward strengthening Hawai'i's social safety net, reducing administrative burden on State employees, and supporting our most vulnerable residents.

We urge you to support S.B.3245.

Mahalo,

Michelle Bartell
President & CEO
Aloha United Way

¹<https://www.auw.org/about/alice-initiative/alice-reports/>

SB-3245

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 2:36:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Kong, MD	Testifying for Hawaii Academy of Family Physicians	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Sen. Joy San Buenaventura, Chair

Sen. Angus McKelvey, Vice Chair

Date: February 16, 2026

From: Hawai'i Academy of Family Physicians Legislative Committee (HAFP)

RE: SB 3245; Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Position: Support

Thank you for allowing testimony on SB 3245. The Hawai'i Academy of Family Physicians (HAFP) Legislative Committee recognizes the benefit of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for all families with food insecurity. Households with adults over the age of 60 are particularly vulnerable. This act would allow our kūpuna more time to plan for and gather information needed for SNAP recertification thereby increasing their access to food.

Thank you for allowing testimony on this vital bill to assure the basic health of the people of Hawai'i.

Natalie Kehau Kong, MD, FAAFP

Vice Chair Legislative Committee

Hawaii Academy of Family Physicians



To: The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Angus 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, February 18, 2026, 1:00pm, Conference Room 225

RE: **SB3245 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of **SB3245**. This measure would require the Department of Human Services to adjust the minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits households, participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project, and report to the legislature.

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 is committed to ensuring whole-person care by addressing key social determinants of health like nutrition. We understand that food insecurity is a critical health issue and key driver of health inequities. Food insecurity remains high among households receiving or seeking SNAP, particularly when benefits are denied¹. SNAP provides essential support to many families, but the application and recertification process can be complicated and often causes eligible recipients to lose their benefits. Extending the certification period for all recipients would reduce these barriers and ensure more people maintain their benefits. Participating in the Elderly Simplified Application Program would allow kūpuna to recertify only once every three years. As such, AlohaCare supports this measure because these changes would ease the burden on both applicants and SNAP staff, improving access to this vital program for everyone.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support** of **SB3245**.

¹ 75% food insecure for households who applied or received SNAP, and 83% food insecure for those denied SNAP. Hawai'i Food Bank, Hawai'i Foodbank Kaua'i, Maui Food Bank, The Food Basket. The State of Food Insecurity in Hawaii 2024-2025. 2025. https://hawaiifoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HawaiiFoodbank_FoodInsecurityReport_2025-25.pdf

SB-3245

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 10:17:06 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John A. H. Tomoso	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

02-14-26

RE: SB3245

Aloha,

I am in strong favor of this Bill. I believe that its Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP), will be good for our Kūpuna and Senior Citizens.

Mahalo for your kind attention.

John A H Tomoso+, MSW, ACSW

51 Ku'ula St., Kahului, HI 96732-2906

john.a.h.tomoso@gmail.com

SB-3245

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 7:39:20 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Support

SB-3245

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:29:10 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Extending SNAP certification periods for seniors makes good sense because it reduces administrative burdens on both elderly participants with fixed income and state agencies, while increasing program access, and decreasing unintentional loss of benefits. Importantly, this will result in ensuring continuous food security for seniors in need.

SB-3245

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:47:54 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Alisha: please pass this bill for those in need - it's crucial.... Mahalo, JW

SB-3245

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:08:07 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this bill, which would extend SNAP certification periods and require participation in the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP).

Mahalo.

SB-3245

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 7:13:06 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Committee Chair, Co-chair and Committee Members,

I am writing to ask that you give favorable consideration to SB3245. I am a member of a faith community that hosts a food pantry as a partner agency with the Hawaii Foodbank. Our team has been trained to assist clients in applying for SNAP. I have helped people in their reapplications and find the process cumbersome. Applications require a lot of information that is unlikely to change for retired elderly people. Please give favorable consideration to SB3245 to help our low-income kupuna. Mahalo for this opportunity to speak.

Anne Leake

Retired Advanced Practice Nurse

Kaneohe

SB-3245

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:51:56 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in **strong support** of SB3245, a bill that modernizes Hawai‘i’s administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by extending certification periods for our kūpuna, streamlining the recertification process, and ensuring a smooth transition for individuals reentering the community from incarceration.

For the over 155,000 residents of Hawai‘i who rely on SNAP, this program is not just a benefit; it is a critical lifeline that ensures families can put food on the table. However, bureaucratic barriers often prevent eligible residents from accessing the nutrition they need.

Currently, many SNAP recipients—particularly our elderly and disabled residents—lose benefits during the recertification process due to paperwork burdens or mandatory interviews, even when their financial and medical circumstances have not changed. This "churn" disrupts access to nutritious food and creates unnecessary administrative costs.

By requiring the Department of Human Services to participate in the **Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP)**, this bill would extend certification periods for qualified kūpuna and adults with disabilities to up to 36 months and waive the burdensome recertification interview. This allows our most vulnerable residents to maintain consistent access to food with dignity and less red tape. It is important to note that **25 other states have already implemented ESAP** and have seen success in reducing administrative burdens while maintaining program integrity. Hawai‘i should not lag behind in serving our kūpuna.

SB3245 is a smart, efficient, and humane update to our SNAP administration. It honors our kūpuna, and ensures that federal dollars are used effectively to fight hunger in our state.

I urge the Committee to pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 1:00 PM

Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 3245 - RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Aloha Chair 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 SB 3245**, which requires the Department of Human Services to adjust the minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits households, participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project, and report to the Legislature.

SNAP is critical to the over 155,000 residents who receive benefits in Hawai'i.¹ Unfortunately, SNAP applicants face many barriers to applying for federal SNAP benefits and some SNAP users lose crucial benefits during the recertification process, despite no changes to eligibility. Senate Bill 3245 would help overcome some of these barriers for our elderly community members by implementing the Elderly Simplified Application Program (ESAP). ESAP is a SNAP demonstration project focused on households with adults aged 60 or older and people with disabilities. ESAP streamlines the application and certification process by simplifying the verification process, providing 36-month certifications, and waiving the recertification interview. ESAP serves households that do not have earned income and in which all adult members are aged 60 or older and/or have a disability. Twenty-five other states have already implemented ESAP.²

ESAP is a model program with documented benefits that would help provide food security for our vulnerable kūpuna. I respectfully request that you **vote in support of SB 3245**.

Mahalo for supporting our most vulnerable community members,

Christine Andrews

Wailuku, Maui

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, "SNAP Data Tables: National and/or State Level Monthly and/or Annual Data," 2025.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

² U.S. Department of Agriculture, "SNAP State Options Report," Food and Nutrition Service, 2025, p. 28.

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-stateOptionsReport-17edition-120925.pdf>

SB-3245

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 11:21:22 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathryn Braun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Kathryn Braun, and I am a long-time educators in the Hawai‘i School System. I also am an older adult and help other older adults access programs they need.

I am writing to express strong support for SB 3245, a pivotal piece of legislation that has the potential to improve SNAP access and ultimately strengthen our state’s food security landscape.

Some SNAP users lose crucial benefits during the recertification process, despite no changes to eligibility. The proposed Elderly Simplified Application Process (ESAP) extends the recertification period to every 3 years and allows kūpuna and adults with disabilities to waive recertification interviews.

Hawai‘i should join the other [25 US states that have already implemented ESAP](#). Ensuring food access reduces reliance on emergency services and homelessness, ultimately benefiting individuals saving taxpayer dollars.

Mahalo for your leadership and for your consideration of SB 3245.. This bill is essential to building a thriving, food-secure Hawai‘i while strengthening one of our most essential safety nets.

OFFICE OF CLIMATE CHANGE SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY
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LATE

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



KEALOHA FOX, Ph. D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR &
CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER
PO'O HO'OKŌ & KAHU OLA LOA

VACANT
DEPUTY DIRECTOR &
DEPUTY CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER
HOPE PO'O & HOPE KAHU OLA LOA

TESTIMONY OF KEALOHA FOX, PH.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABILITY AND
RESILIENCY AND CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 1:00 PM
Conference RM 225 and Via Videoconference

TO: Sen. Joy San Buenaventura, Chair, Sen. Angus McKelvey, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 3245, RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL
NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The City and County of Honolulu's ("City") Office of Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resiliency ("Resilience Office") **supports** Senate Bill 3245, which would extend minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households and require the Department of Human Services to participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project.

Food security is a cornerstone of community resilience. On O'ahu, more than one in four households experience food insecurity, and over one-third of residents live below the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) threshold, reflecting the growing gap between wages and the cost of basic necessities. These pressures are intensified by climate-related disruptions, including extreme heat, rising food prices, and supply chain vulnerabilities, which disproportionately impact kūpuna, people with disabilities, and low-income households. Reliable access to nutritious food improves public health outcomes, reduces emergency response needs during climate shocks, and strengthens household capacity to withstand rising costs associated with climate change.

This measure reduces unnecessary administrative barriers that may prevent eligible individuals and families from maintaining their SNAP benefits. Extending certification periods and simplifying recertification for vulnerable populations will reduce the risk of benefit interruptions and help ensure more consistent access to nutrition and improve stability for households already facing compounding economic and climate stresses. This complements City efforts to build a more resilient local food system, reduce disparities in health and economic outcomes, and supports aging in place for kūpuna.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **support** of SB3245.



LATE

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

Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 1:00PM

RE: Support for SB 3245, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, 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 strong support for **SB 3245**. This bill would require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to extend minimum certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits households and participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP).

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.

One issue our network members report is that the frequent need to recertify can result in some families losing benefits, even when they still qualify. Extending certification periods to the maximum allowable by federal law could alleviate the burden on both applicants and SNAP staff workers. This bill would extend the certification period to 12 months for most households and up to 36 months for kūpuna and people with disabilities—an opportunity to reduce the risk of losing benefits due to paperwork issues. Following suit of 25 other states, implementing ESAP would also simplify the process by allowing kūpuna to waive recertification interviews.¹

Mahalo for your leadership and for your consideration of **SB 3245**. Extending SNAP certification periods will be a tremendous relief for struggling families as well as eligibility staff.

Hawai'i Hunger Action Network membership

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, "SNAP State Options Report," Food and Nutrition Service, 2025, p. 28. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-stateOptionsReport-17edition-120925.pdf>