



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Households in Hawai'i to Suffer Deep Cuts to SNAP Benefits; Hawai'i Anti-Hunger Organizations Urge Lawmakers to Address Hunger Cliff

HONOLULU, Hawai'i — Local anti-hunger organizations are urging Hawai'i policymakers to swiftly address a looming “hunger cliff” that will affect more than 83,000 Hawai'i residents participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The cliff is a result of Congress' decision to end the federal emergency allotments that were implemented to reduce food insecurity and stimulate the economy for the duration of the pandemic Public Health Emergency. These temporary benefit boosts expire at the end of this month.

“Even though the pandemic-related closures are over, we are still dealing with the economic fallout,” said Daniela Spoto, director of anti-hunger initiatives at Hawai'i Appleseed. “These boosts to SNAP benefits are still critical for the survival of so many Hawai'i families. We need to take action now or we're going to experience a serious spike in food insecurity across the entire state.”

The end of the emergency allotments means Hawai'i is projected to lose \$17 million in federal funds per month, according to the [Food Research & Action Center](#) (FRAC), which could have ripple effects across the entire economy. [The USDA estimates](#) that each \$1 in SNAP generates up to \$1.54 in economic activity, benefitting all parts of the food chain—from farmers, ranchers and food manufacturers, to truckers, retailers and store employees.

Local service providers can mitigate some of the anticipated impact by making sure that SNAP households are taking full advantage of deductions for certain out-of-pocket expenses, and by connecting households with additional resources. Local food banks are bracing for an influx of people in need of assistance purchasing food.

“It seems like there’s always some new emergency,” said Kristin Frost Albrecht, executive director of The Food Basket, Hawai‘i Island’s food bank. “From all the natural disasters to the government shutdowns and the pandemic, and now the end of all the federal aid that was finally giving people a little bit of a safety net. The need hasn’t gone away, and the end of these allotments will only make it worse.”

Inadequate benefits are not the only concern. “The cost-of-living adjustment to social security for one client meant that he missed being eligible for SNAP by just \$7, resulting in a net loss of \$360 a month in his already tight budget,” said Albrecht. “These automatic annual adjustments are something that people have no control over. It’s heartbreaking.”

Hawai‘i anti-hunger organizations are calling on state lawmakers to offer relief from these sharp drop offs, known as “benefit cliffs.” The Hawai‘i legislature is currently considering a bill, [HB 740](#), that would increase the minimum monthly benefit to \$250 per person, with benefits gradually decreasing for each dollar earned beyond the income eligibility threshold.

“This bill would address the two major concerns we have surrounding SNAP: income eligibility is too strict, and monthly allotments are too low,” said Spoto. “SNAP is widely known as the nation’s first line of defense against hunger. But the truth is, in Hawai‘i, it’s just not enough.”

Other jurisdictions, including [New Jersey](#) and [Washington, D.C.](#), are already moving forward with similar proposals given the looming cuts. However, congressional action is still needed to make adequate SNAP benefits permanent, and to expand program accessibility. Local and national anti-hunger advocates are [encouraging](#) Congressional lawmakers to pass the [Closing the Meal Gap bill](#) so that the program remains a viable safety net for times of economic stress.

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*Hawai‘i Appleseed envisions a Hawai‘i that puts its people first—a Hawai‘i where everyone can meet their basic needs while living happy, healthy and creative lives. We advocate for economic justice for and with Hawai‘i’s people.*