



February 21, 2018

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

Re: **Strong Support for SB2398 SD1**

Hrg: February 23, 2018 at 11:00am

The Hawaii Public Health Association is a group of over 600 community members, public health professionals and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. HPHA also serves as a voice for public health professionals and as a repository for information about public health in the Pacific.

HPHA strongly supports SB2398 SD1, which improves access to affordable, healthy, and local fresh fruits and vegetables by creating a matching incentive program for beneficiaries of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

A matching incentive program that is made available in farmers' markets and other direct food retail venues such as grocery stores will help to reduce food insecurity and improve dietary behaviors among many of Hawaii's low-income families. Providing a dollar-for-dollar match for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables will increase the purchasing power of SNAP participants as it frees up room in their budget for other equally essential expenditures such as housing and health care.

Healthy produce incentives will also improve healthy eating behaviors among Hawaii's low-income families. With food costs so much higher in Hawaii than on the mainland, many SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) participants often spend their SNAP dollars on low-priced unhealthy options. Poor dietary behaviors are associated obesity, heart diseases and other chronic diseases.

The implementation of a local incentive program will also support local farmers and boost the economy. Healthy produce incentives encourage more spending by local markets and can increase farmers' income and customer base.

A matching incentive program is good for public health and the economy. We strongly support SB2398 and respectfully ask you to pass this measure out of committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on important health issues affecting people in Hawaii.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Holly Kessler'.

Holly Kessler, Executive Director
Hawaii Public Health Association