



HAWAI' APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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HAWAI' DROPS TO 44TH IN THE NATION IN CHILDREN'S SUMMER MEAL PARTICIPATION

Fewer than 1 in 11 keiki in free or reduced-price school lunch were reached by summer meals

HONOLULU, Hawai'i — In an annual report released today by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), which ranks all 50 states and the District of Columbia on summer lunch participation, Hawai'i dropped from 43rd to 44th in the nation.

The "[Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report](#)" reveals that 8.7 percent—or fewer than 1 in 11—keiki in Hawai'i received summer lunch on an average day in July 2019 as compared to the number of low-income students who participated school lunch during the 2018-2019 school year.

The national average is one child for every seven low-income children who participated school lunch during the 2018–2019 school year, according to FRAC's report. The drop means that 123 fewer children in Hawai'i received meals through summer lunch programs in July 2019 compared to July 2018.

Summer Nutrition Programs provide funding to schools, local government agencies, and private nonprofit organizations to offer healthy meals at sites. Meals and snacks are provided at sites where at least 50 percent of the children in the geographic area are eligible.

If Hawai'i had reached FRAC's goal of 40 children participating in the Summer Nutrition Programs in July 2019 for every 100 receiving free or reduced-price lunch during the 2018–2019 school year, an additional 18,800 children would have been fed each weekday. The state would have collected an additional \$1.64 million in federal reimbursements in July alone.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and community organizations relied on the Summer Nutrition Programs to feed children who had lost access to free and reduced-price school meals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued nationwide waivers to program rules to enable these meals to be served safely and efficiently.

"Both the Department of Education and community organizations stepped up to provide free keiki grab-and-go meals across Hawai'i since schools closed in March," said Nicole Woo, senior policy analyst for

Hawai'i Appleseed. "These meals would not have been possible without nationwide USDA rule waivers, and these waivers need to be continued through the upcoming school year to allow our community to serve meals to low-income children during the pandemic."

FRAC's report measures participation in the Summer Nutrition Programs in July 2019 in absolute numbers and by comparing the number of children receiving summer meals to the number of low-income children receiving school lunch during the regular school year, nationally and in each state. The regular school year is used as a benchmark because such a high proportion of low-income children eat school lunch on regular school days.

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About [FRAC](#)

FRAC is the leading national nonprofit organization working to eradicate poverty-related hunger and undernutrition in the United States. Working alongside a national network of stakeholders, FRAC protects and defends the federal nutrition programs through its research, analyses, technical assistance, and communications.

About [Hawai'i Appleseed](#)

Hawai'i Appleseed is working to build a more socially just Hawai'i, where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve economic security and fulfill their potential. We change systems that perpetuate inequality and injustice through policy development, coalition building, and advocacy.