



# HAWAI'I APPLESEED

## CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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### DONATIONS AT SAFEWAY IN SEPTEMBER WILL HELP END HUNGER

All through September, when you make a donation to the *Nourishing Neighbors* campaign at Safeway stores throughout Hawai'i, you'll be helping more Hawai'i students start the day with a healthy breakfast.

HONOLULU, Hawai'i — All through September, 2021, when you visit your local Safeway store in Hawai'i, you'll see signs advertising the annual *Nourishing Neighbors* fundraiser, sponsored by the Safeway Foundation and with the support of the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC).

Making a donation at the register when you check out of any Safeway store on Kaua'i, O'ahu or Hawai'i Island will support our work to help students continue to receive free, healthy meals at a time when many families are struggling more than ever before.

According to the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) 2021 [School Breakfast Scorecard](#), only 25,559 low-income children in Hawai'i participated in the national School Breakfast Program on an average school day during the 2019–2020 school year. That's about 40 percent of those who receive free or reduced price lunch. This compares to a national rate of 58.4 percent, placing Hawai'i at 50th in the nation for participation in this important program.

If our entire state were to raise our school breakfast participation rate to just 70 percent (of those participating in lunch), almost 19,000 more students would benefit from school breakfast, and our state would get nearly \$4 million per year in additional federal funds. This is an achievable goal: in West Virginia (the top-ranked state) more than 84 percent of students who participate in free and discounted lunch also participate in breakfast.

"Parents often don't realize that breakfast is available through their child's school," said Daniela Spoto, Hawai'i Appleseed Director of Anti-Hunger Initiatives. "Even families that are financially stable often have such busy schedules that they find it challenging to prepare a good, balanced breakfast in the morning. And data shows us that students who skip breakfast have a harder time learning."

In typical years, students would need to qualify to receive free meals, and those who do not qualify

pay either a full or reduced-price. However, this year, national waivers have made it possible for all Hawai'i public schools (and many charter schools) to serve free meals to all students—a tremendous opportunity for expanding participation in the breakfast program. All meals served through the United States Department of Agriculture-reimbursed school meal programs are required to meet high quality nutrition standards.

The COVID-19 pandemic closed schools and forced the Hawai'i State Department of Education (DOE) to transition to a “grab-and-go” model of meal service which grew to offer free breakfast and lunch at over 200 schools statewide.

The transition to free grab-and-go breakfast, which allowed parents to pick up breakfast and lunch at the same time, helped boost breakfast participation to nearly pre-pandemic levels. However, lunch participation rates were still at only about a third of what they were before the beginning of the pandemic, so overall meal participation was down considerably.

“We are very pleased with how the DOE has stepped up to provide free meals to so many students during campus closures,” said Spoto. “With 100 percent free meals this year, we’re hopeful that we can continue to work with the DOE to re-imagine how breakfast is served at school, making it easier and more convenient for as many students as possible.”

FRAC, No Kid Hungry, and other national groups recommend boosting participation by offering “breakfast after the bell.” This umbrella term includes multiple innovative breakfast delivery models such as:

- Offering breakfast in the classroom while students are going over the day’s agenda;
- A “second-chance breakfast” after the first period; and
- Grab-and-go breakfast kiosks in a convenient location.

Another strategy to boost participation is by offering new menu items that feature local ingredients, or dishes that students have requested, and promoting these items through various channels to both parents and students.

The *Nourishing Neighbors* campaign will run the entire month of September at more than 20 Safeway stores in Hawai'i. Donations at the Maui Safeway locations will go to the Maui Food Bank, another worthy cause to support.

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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.