



HAWAI'I APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

For Immediate Release
February 13, 2020

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HAWAI'I DROPS TO 51ST IN THE NATION FOR SCHOOL BREAKFAST PARTICIPATION

HONOLULU, Hawai'i — Even fewer low-income children in Hawaii are starting their day with a healthy school breakfast. Today, Hawai'i dropped from 50th to 51st in the nation for school breakfast participation among all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

According to the newest national *School Breakfast Scorecard*, released today by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), 25,476 low-income children in Hawai'i participated in the national School Breakfast Program on an average school day in 2018–19, a decrease of 2.7 percent, or 1,047 students, from the previous year.

FRAC's report finds that fewer than 40 low-income children in Hawai'i ate school breakfast for every 100 that received free or reduced-price school lunch during the 2018–19 school year. This is far below the national average of 57.5 per 100.

In fact, the top two states, West Virginia and Vermont, had 83 and 70, respectively, out of 100 of their low-income lunch students also getting school breakfast. If Hawai'i can increase its rate to 70 percent, nearly 20,000 additional low-income keiki would receive the benefits of school breakfast, and the state would receive an additional \$5.8 million per year in federal funds.

Hawai'i's First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige, a former public-school teacher and vice principal, is encouraging students to start their day with breakfast at school. "We know it's hard to concentrate when you're hungry, and when students eat breakfast, they're ready to learn and more likely to succeed," said Amano-Ige.

The *School Breakfast Scorecard* also describes best practices to boost school breakfast participation. The first is utilizing the Community Eligibility Program (CEP), which allows high-poverty schools to offer school meals free of charge to all students. The Hawai'i Department of Education has been proactive and effective in recent years at expanding the number of CEP schools across the state. Hawai'i went from seven CEP schools in the 2015-16 school year, to 30 schools in 2016-17, and on to 52 schools in 2017-18.

The report measures the reach of the School Breakfast Program in the 2018–19 school year—nationally and in each state—based on a variety of metrics, and examines the impact of select trends and policies on

program participation. Read the [*School Breakfast Scorecard*](#) in full.

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The Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice is committed to 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, advocacy and coalition building.