



HAWAI'I APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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REPORT EXAMINES THE STATE OF POVERTY IN HAWAI'I SINCE THE GREAT RECESSION

The state's high cost of living and low wages has made recovery slow and painful for many families.

HONOLULU, Hawai'i — The Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice released a report today entitled "The State of Poverty in Hawai'i: How Hawai'i's Residents Are Faring Post-Recovery." The report brings together the most recent available data to provide a snapshot of how low-income residents have fared after the economic recovery from the Great Recession of 2008–09.

While some indicators have improved, families continue to struggle. Hawai'i has the highest cost of living but the lowest wages in the country when adjusted for the amount of money it takes for a family to get by in Hawai'i. As a result, Hawai'i has the 6th highest rate of poverty in the country under the Supplemental Poverty Measure, which factors in both the cost of living and available government assistance. Rates of children in poverty have yet to return to pre-recession levels.

Nationally, Hawai'i has not only the 2nd highest effective tax rate on low-income households, but also levies the 2nd highest income tax burden on families in poverty.

When it comes to housing, Hawai'i faces both the highest cost of housing and the highest rate of homelessness in the United States.

Meanwhile, one in eight residents faces food insecurity, forcing families to make difficult trade-offs.

More than half—52 percent—of public school students are economically disadvantaged, which diminishes students' educational achievement, even if they receive high-quality educational services.

Key recommendations in the report include boosting income and reducing the state tax burden on working families through policies such as a continuing to raise the minimum wage, implementing a state earned income tax credit, and improving the low-income household renters' credit.

Also highlighted are innovative housing policies, including shallow rental subsidies, more funding for

affordable homes, expansion of Housing First, and inclusionary zoning.

To reduce hunger and help children, the report endorses improving access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the adoption of new school breakfast models, investments in early childhood education, and increased financial support for our schools.

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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.