



# HAWAI'I APPLESEED

## CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## FEWER THAN ONE IN 11 LOW-INCOME KEIKI GET FREE SUMMER FOOD

A national report released today shows Hawai'i has dropped to 43rd in the nation in providing free or reduced-price school lunches to keiki over the summer, but there is reason for optimism going forward.

HONOLULU, Hawai'i — Fewer than one in 11 (8.8 percent) of the low-income students who ate free or reduced-price school lunch during the academic year also got summer lunch in 2018. That places Hawai'i at 43rd in the nation and well below the national average of 14.1 percent. That is a drop from 41st place a year earlier, and translates into 500 fewer children in Hawai'i getting free lunch on a typical summer day.

This ranking comes from a national report, [\*Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation\*](#), which was released today by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), a leading national anti-hunger organization located in Washington, D.C. This report analyzes participation in the federal summer nutrition programs across the country. The rankings are determined by comparing the number of children and youth receiving free summer lunch to the number of low-income children eating school lunch during the regular school year.

In comparison, the top-performing jurisdiction, Washington, D.C., served summer lunch to over a third (34.5 percent) of its low-income students who received school lunch in 2018. If Hawai'i could increase its summer lunch participation to FRAC's benchmark of 40 low-income keiki per every 100 who eat school lunch during the academic year, the state would feed an additional 19,000 low-income children and youth each summer, as well as receive an additional \$1.54 million in federal funding in July alone.

On the bright side, Hawai'i's ranking is likely to improve next year, due to an [exciting new partnership](#) between the Department of Education's 'Āina Pono program and the Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC). With 'Āina Pono providing meals and a food truck and WCCHC providing volunteers, hundreds of children and youth on the Wai'anae Coast are getting free meals this summer.

“We commend 'Āina Pono on bringing summer meals to keiki who need them with their new summer food truck,” said Hawai'i Appleseed Senior Policy Analyst Nicole Woo. “Boosting participation in summer meal programs is a win-win. These programs nourish students when they aren't getting lunch at school, help families stretch budgets further, and draw federal funds into the local economy.”

Children and youth also benefit from the enrichment activities offered at the vast majority of sites—activities that keep them learning, engaged, and better prepared to return to the classroom in the fall.

Another bright spot is the fact that Hawai'i provided free summer breakfast to 78.2 percent of the number of keiki who got free summer lunch in 2018, far outperforming the national average of 53.8 percent. FRAC's [separate report](#) on summer breakfast states that, "While it is encouraging that these states [with strong participation in summer breakfast but weak participation in summer lunch] served summer breakfast to the majority of children eating summer lunch, too many children are still missing out on both meals."

The Hawai'i State Department of Education has posted a list of the dates and hours of operation of the record number of [71 public schools](#) offering free meals this summer. The Honolulu and Kaua'i County Departments of Parks and Recreation, Maui's PALS Program, as well as a number of charter or private schools, public housing developments, and community organizations are also offering free summer meals.

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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.