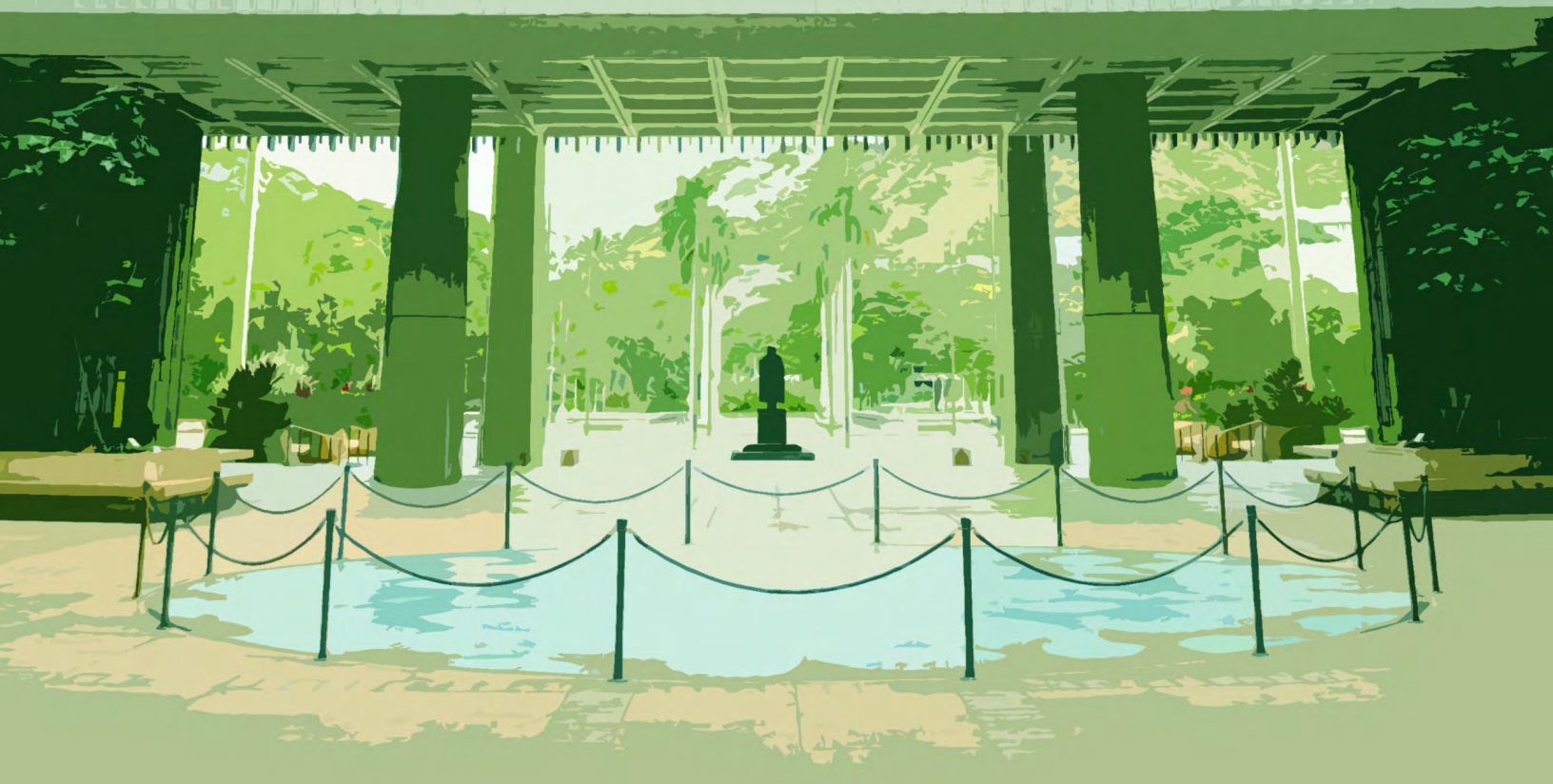




HAWAI'I APPLESEED
CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

POLICY \approx PERSPECTIVE

2021 STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT





HAWAII APPLESEED
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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.

At Hawai'i Appleseed, we carry out our mission by engaging in:

- Advocacy at state and local departments to ensure that the policies, laws, and practices intended to address the problems of those living in poverty are well designed and implemented fairly and effectively.
- Policy reports that educate and inform key stakeholders of the issues facing the communities we represent and provide ingenious, high-quality solutions to the problems that we work on.
- Coalition-building with other community groups that share a common interest in alleviating poverty in Hawai'i, and supporting the work of public interest advocates in Hawai'i through collaborative partnerships.

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INTRODUCTION

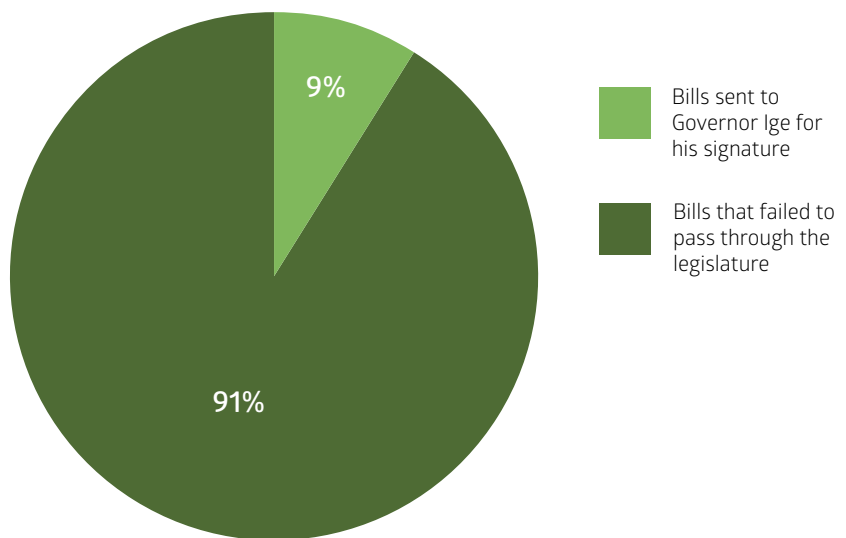
OUT OF ALL the archipelagos in the world with a significant population, Hawai'i is the most isolated. Perhaps for this reason, our need to come together as a community and to support one another is more apparent than elsewhere. This is not a weakness. In fact, it is a strength: it means Hawai'i's people have more opportunities to work together. That ability to problem-solve collectively means that we have a chance to create a Hawai'i in which everyone can thrive. But good public policy that moves us in that direction is not a guarantee.

By some metrics, Hawai'i appeared to be doing well prior to the COVID-19 pandemic—we had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation in 2019, for example. However, this data point is deceiving, as it hides the fact that many in Hawai'i were working two or more jobs.

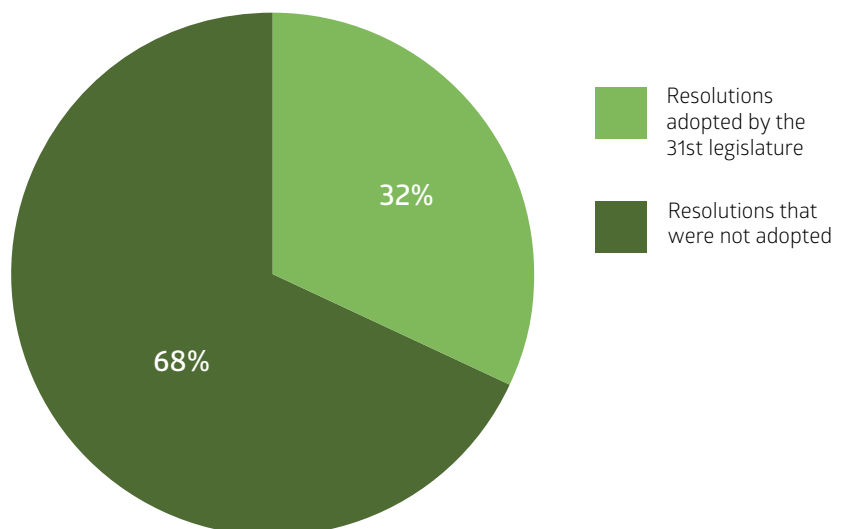
And yet even with so many people working, close to half of Hawai'i's households still weren't earning enough to make ends meet. Because of inequitable policy choices that have been made over the course of decades, a person can now work a full 40 hour week in Hawai'i and still not make enough to cover their most basic needs.

Hawai'i's upside down tax system takes a larger share of income from struggling families than from wealthy investors. A minimum wage worker in Hawai'i needs to work 114 hours a week—the equivalent of almost three full time jobs—to afford rent on a modest two-bedroom apartment. Our housing policy encourages speculation and investment, while deprioritizing the sheltering of families. Policymakers have shaped an economy that relies far too much on extractive tourism that provides little to residents in

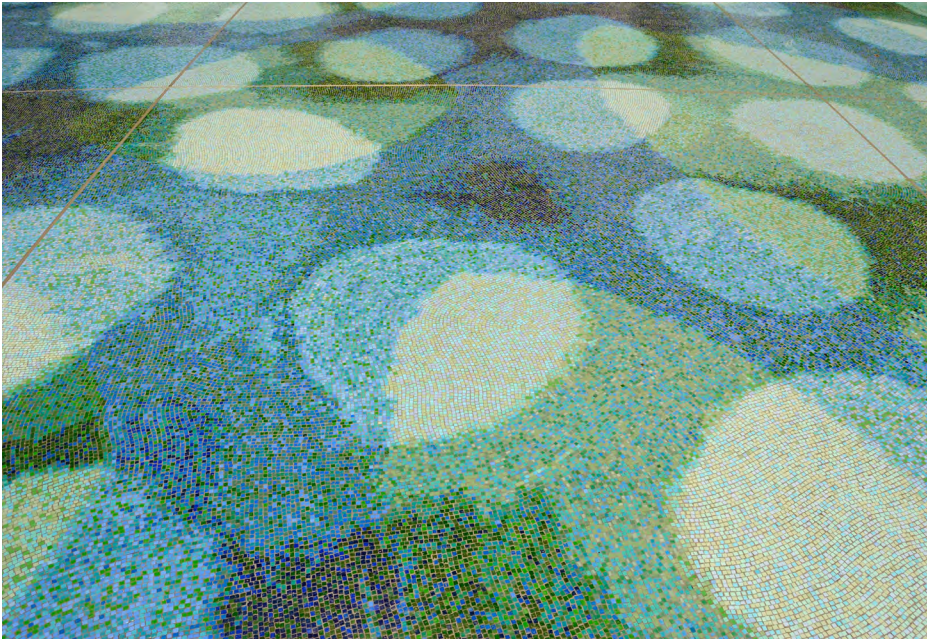
Percentage of bills that passed the 31st legislature compared to bills that did not



Percentage of resolutions adopted during the 31st legislature compared to those that were not



“WE NEED A DRAMATIC SHIFT IN OUR PUBLIC POLICY THAT IS CAPABLE OF BRINGING FORTH TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE IN OUR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS.”



return and fails to adequately steward Hawai‘i’s precious—and limited—natural resources.

These policies are making it harder each year for Hawai‘i residents to succeed. Hawai‘i’s population is declining,¹ in part, because an increasing number of residents are leaving the state for more affordable locals. This is especially problematic for the indigenous people of Hawai‘i. In part because of living costs, Native Hawaiians are steadily migrating away from their homeland. In 2010, about 227,000 or 45 percent of Native Hawaiians (alone or in combination with another race) lived outside of Hawai‘i.² In 2018, about 310,000 or 50 percent of Native Hawaiians lived outside of Hawai‘i.³

To reverse these trends, we need a dramatic shift in our public policy that is capable of bringing forth

transformational change in our economic and social systems.

When the pandemic hit our islands, people came together to help one another. Neighbors, churches, and community groups reached out to people in need. Mutual aid groups were established almost overnight. Many businesses that weren’t severely disrupted by COVID-19 took on the kuleana of helping their employees and community weather the financial hard times and, in turn, community members made concerted efforts to patronize struggling local businesses.

Nonprofits and essential government workers doubled their efforts to try to meet the massive increase in need for their services. People donated time and money. The philanthropic community mobilized quickly to provide desperately needed resources as Hawai‘i waited for federal relief

money to arrive. Different sectors came together to collaborate and problem-solve in a way that is emblematic of Hawai‘i’s proud tradition of alu like—of “striving together.”

Yet, in the legislation that policymakers passed during the 2021 legislative session, this spirit of alu like was largely absent. The legislature did make an important and successful effort to preserve critical services using federal relief funds—a priority for both lawmakers and Hawai‘i Appleseed. But at the same time, the past legislative session represents a serious missed opportunity for addressing the deep flaws in our system. The pandemic-recession may have thrown into stark relief the impacts of these flaws on working families, businesses and the economy as a whole—but these are flaws that have existed for decades.

Hawai‘i’s people are depending on us to do better, and we can. We can build on our strengths and come together—just as we have in addressing the immediate concerns of the pandemic—to address systemic inequity, injustice and racism, and to rebalance and transform our vulnerable economic system. We can learn from past mistakes, identify injustices, and work to remedy them.

It is in that spirit that this legislative summary tracks the outcome of the bills and resolutions Hawai‘i Appleseed supported during the 2021 legislative session. Some of these bills represent relatively small changes—but taken together they constitute a significant effort to move toward the kind of system Hawai‘i’s people need to thrive in this unique and special island chain. Unfortunately, many of them were shelved, some without having so much as a hearing.

DEFINITIONS

CHAMBERS: There are two chambers in Hawai'i's legislature: the State House of Representatives and the Senate.

COMPANION BILLS: Often, the same policy proposal is contained in two (or more) bills introduced to both chambers in tandem—called companion bills.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE: Often, companion bills end up with differing language at the end of the legislative process. Only one version of a bill may be sent to the governor for his signature. Therefore, unless one chamber agrees to the other's version, the two chambers must appoint conferees to a "conference committee."

The conference committees from each chamber then meet to try and come to agreement on a final version. The conference committee chairs and conferees differ in each case. To find out which legislators participated in a conference committee on a given bill, review the bill's Measure Status page on the Hawai'i State Capitol website.

DIED VS DEFERRED: Appleseed describes bills that did not become law as having either "died" or been "deferred." In both cases, the bill did not make it through the legislative process, but we use the different terms to express small, but important, distinctions.

When we say a bill "died" in a committee, we mean the committee chair did not schedule the bill for a hearing. If a bill does not receive a hearing in the committees to which it is referred before certain deadlines in the process, it automatically dies without a vote being held.

When we say a bill was "deferred" in a committee, it means the chair did hold a hearing, but the chair's

recommendation was that the bill should not be advanced in the legislative process. Legislators use the term "deferred" in this case.

Sometimes a measure is deferred or allowed to die because of technical flaws in its language. Other times, the committee chair or the leadership team in a chamber is opposed to the policy itself. In a few cases bills died or were deferred to allow a different bill containing the same policy idea to pass instead. We have noted these cases.

JOINT HEARING: Sometimes a bill is referred to a hearing involving two (or more) committees at the same time. This can occur for various reasons, including to help a bill make a deadline—as well as, conversely, to make it logistically more difficult for a bill to be scheduled for a hearing at all.

SPECIAL SESSION: The regular legislative session takes place each year from January–May. Sometimes a "special session" is called to resolve outstanding business or override gubernatorial vetoes. In 2021 (as of July), one special session was held to override multiple vetoes.

VETO AND OVERRIDE: As part of our system of checks and balances, the governor has the authority to "veto" bills passed by the legislature, preventing them from becoming law. However, the legislature may override a veto with a 2/3rds vote of its members. The vetoed bill would then become law.

ABBREVIATIONS: This report uses the following committee abbreviations:

ECD (House Committee on Economic Development): Chaired by Rep. Sean Quinlan

CPC (House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce): Chaired by Rep. Aaron Johanson

CPN (Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection): Chaired by Senator Roz Baker

FIN (House Committee on Finance): Chaired by Rep. Sylvia Luke

HHH (House Committee on Health, Human Services, & Homelessness): Chaired by Rep. Ryan Yamane

HSG (House Committee on Housing): Chaired by Rep. Nadine Nakamura

JDC (Senate Committee on the Judiciary): Chaired by Senator Karl Rhoads

JHA (House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs): Chaired by Rep. Mark Nakashima

LAT (House Committee on Labor & Tourism): Chaired by Rep. Richard Onishi

LCA (Senate Committee on Labor, Culture, and the Arts): Chaired by Senator Brian Taniguchi

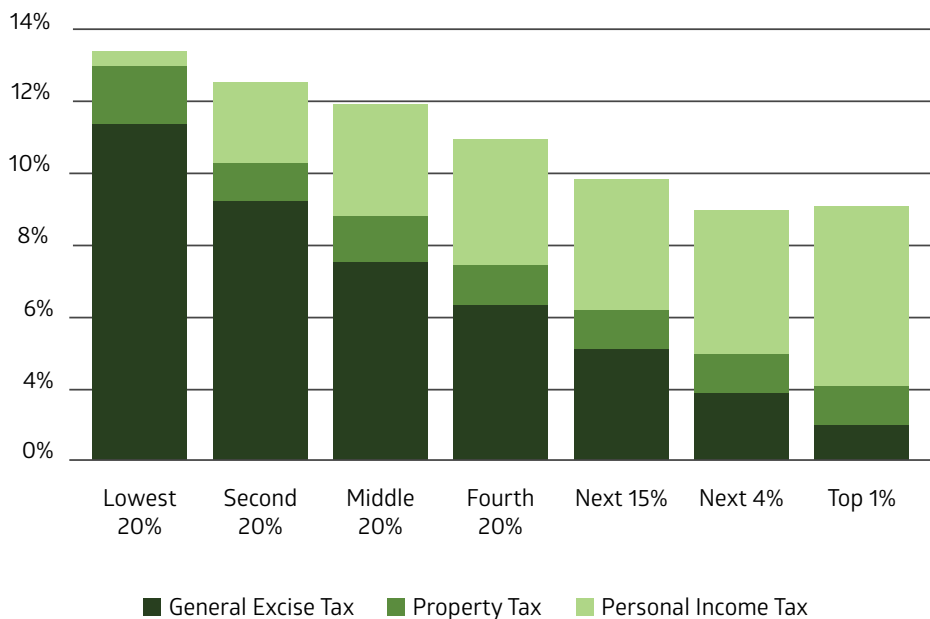
PDP (House Committee on Pandemic & Disaster Preparedness): Chaired by Rep. Linda Ichiyama

WAL (House Committee on Water & Land): Chaired by Rep. David Tarnas

WAM (Senate Committee on Ways & Means): Chaired by Senator Donovan Dela Cruz

TAXATION & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Percentage of Income Paid in State Taxes
by Income Level



UNDER OUR current tax structure, Hawai'i's lowest income households pay almost 14 percent of their income in taxes, while the top 5 percent of income earners—those with abundance to spare—pay closer to 9 percent of their income. This is not only bad for struggling families, who need every extra dollar they can get to make ends meet—it's also bad for the entire economy.

Roughly two-thirds of our economy is powered by consumer spending, and the vast majority of that economic activity comes from lower-income folks simply because there are so many more of them than there are folks at the top. Even the wealthiest person only buys so many groceries or meals a week and, even

if those goods are higher in value, the share of economic activity there isn't even close to what is generated by the working class majority. Before 2020, 42 percent of Hawai'i's households were barely making it. The pandemic pushed that number up to 59 percent.⁴ Without the spending of these working families fueling our economic engine, everyone—including business—loses.

Not only that, but government revenue from taxes on economic activity shrink, threatening the solvency of critical government operations and the jobs that support them, and preventing the state from making any progress on addressing serious problems like the interconnected housing and houselessness crisis, or climate change and sea level rise.

To correct this out-of-balance system, stimulate the economy through consumer spending, and provide government with the revenue it needs to tackle large scale problems, Hawai'i Appleseed supports tax policy changes that will create a more progressive tax structure, allowing working families to keep more of what they earn while asking the wealthy and profitable corporations to pay a more reasonable share to support and upgrade the public infrastructure from which they, too, benefit.

Once it became clear the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) would inject federal money into the state budget, Appleseed hoped the extra breathing room might provide an opportunity to move the conversation toward addressing the underlying problems with our tax system. To a large degree, this did not happen. In fact, given that only one of the many good [tax fairness proposals](#) introduced in 2021 passed, the federal relief money may have actually removed the drive to pass tax fairness proposals altogether.

With budget holes patched, legislators opted against raising the hundreds of millions in revenue these proposals could generate for the state, as well as the opportunity to correct unjust components of our tax system.

To prevent Republican-controlled state legislatures from using the ARPA infusion as deficit-cover to cut taxes for the rich instead of using it to pay for social services and government programs, the Biden Administration stipulated that any tax cut states intended to make would need to be covered by revenue exclusive of ARPA funds. Some legislators insisted this meant any tax cut might disqualify Hawai'i from receiving ARPA funds⁵

TAXATION & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Workers rallied outside the Hawai'i State Capitol on February 24, 2021, to protest the flawed response from the state government in getting insurance benefits out to those who need them in a timely manner, and to encourage the legislature to pass policies that would help workers and the economy, including tax fairness proposals, a minimum wage increase and exempting 2020 unemployment benefits from state income tax, none of which were accomplished during the 2021 session. // Hawai'i Workers Center



even though the U.S. Treasury Department made it clear that tax cuts were allowed—they just needed to be offset by state tax increases elsewhere.⁶

Since the tax increases proposed during the 2021 legislative session were targeted exclusively at the top 5 percent of Hawai'i taxpayers, they would have been perfect vehicles to both address the tax offset concern with ARPA, and to make our tax system more fair for workers in the long run.⁷ But most of these bills were killed, including bills to eliminate special treatment for capital gains income, to increase taxes on multi-million dollar inheritances, and to close loopholes for offshore tax havens and corporate profit reporting.

There was one tax increase bill that did make it out of the legislature: HB58 would have raised the conveyance tax on the sale of real estate valued over \$4 million, generating revenue for the state to support its social safety net programs and discouraging some of the investment frenzy on housing.

However, Governor Ige vetoed HB58, stating that the “economic position has significantly brightened and ... we no longer need to take some of the extraordinary revenue actions proposed.”⁸ State legislators declined

to override the veto despite meeting for a special session to override others, settling for a return to the problematic pre-pandemic status quo.

The legislature also failed to take up another important tax policy issue: the extension and expansion of the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC is one of the most effective measures to bring working families out of poverty, but Hawai'i's EITC is set to expire at the end of next year.

Presumably, the program was not extended because of spending concerns. Yet the legislature showed it was willing to spend money this session when it chose to fund pandemic business loans.^{9,10} Business interests are an important part of our local economy—we need them, and supporting them is good. However, because our economy relies on consumer spending, the absence of balanced support for workers is disastrous, not just to the workers themselves, but to our economic ecosystem.

MINIMUM WAGE

Another policy that would stimulate the economy by putting more money into the pockets of working family consumers—and in a bigger way than any other policy currently

being discussed at the legislature—is raising the minimum wage. Research shows that raising the minimum wage directly increases consumer spending, something our economy desperately needed this past year.¹¹

Raising the minimum wage to \$17 by 2024 would give 269,000 Hawai'i workers a pay increase. That means better health, greater economic stability, less poverty, and more consumer spending at local businesses. More than half of affected workers would be women, 25 percent are parents, and less than 5 percent are teenagers. This raise would benefit 46.4 percent of Native Hawaiian workers, and 64.3 percent of Pacific Islander workers.¹² Four in 10 Hawai'i workers would earn roughly \$4,356 more each year than they do today.¹³

Legislative leadership signaled early on that it had no intention of raising the minimum wage this past year, using the pandemic-recession and loud complaints from some businesses—even citing a thoroughly debunked study¹⁴—as cover to defer taking any action for yet another year. Instead of exploring the well-documented merits of a minimum wage increase, the State House didn't even give the bill a hearing.

2021 TAXATION & ECONOMIC JUSTICE LEGISLATION

Number	Purpose	Outcome
HB58	Increases the conveyance tax on the transfer of residential real estate valued at \$4 million or more and temporarily suspends General Excise Tax (GET) exemptions for certain favored industries.	Vetoed by Governor Ige
HB133	Increases the tax on long-term capital gains from 7.25–9%.	Died in conference committee
HB286	Authorizes the Department of Taxation (DOTAX) to require Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) to report on revenues and assets every year.	Signed into law as Act 78, June 24, 2021
HB432	Extends the state earned income tax credit by five years.	Died in FIN
HB445	Lowers the exclusion amount of Hawaii’s estate tax so that more of the assets of an estate are subject to tax upon transfer to an heir.	Died in WAM.
SB56	Increases personal income tax rate for those earning more than \$400,000; increases the tax on capital gains; increases the corporate income tax and establishes a single corporate income tax rate; temporarily repeals certain GET exemption; increases conveyance taxes for the sale of properties valued at \$4 million or more.	Died in ECD
SB676	Increases the minimum wage for certain employees to \$12.00 per hour beginning 7/1/2022.	Died in LAT
SB679	Provides employees with up to eight weeks of paid family leave during a one-year period	Deffered in LCA
SB868	Creates income brackets for the low-income renter tax credit; provides for adjustment of the credit amount based on the consumer price index.	Died in WAM
SB1302	Requires corporations to include income from all foreign subsidiaries to the state and apportion state income for tax purposes.	Deffered in a Joint CPN and JDC hearing
SB276	Temporarily raises the state income tax rate by 5% for taxpayers in the highest income bracket.	Deffered in WAM

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A BILL providing some strengthened legal protections to renters was passed in the hopes of staving off the worst of the predicted wave of evictions looming just beyond the governor’s moratorium. However, in the midst of a worsening, decades-long affordable housing crisis, little was done to address long-term housing affordability needs.

Multiple bills died that would have helped take advantage of additional federal dollars by prohibiting landlords from discriminating against Section 8 housing voucher tenants. These measures were especially important in Hawai‘i where existing bias from landlords against Section 8 tenants already makes it hard to find housing. Without reforms, the vouchers will like go unused and we will lose out on federal dollars that could have helped struggling families

Only two modest bills passed to improve access to affordable housing. The first bill, HB80, updates the state Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, which is one of the main sources of funding for affordable rental housing projects. The bill expands the pool of investors who can purchase these state tax credits by allowing any Hawai‘i taxpayer to buy the tax credits instead of just banks and insurance companies.

The hope is that this will increase the demand for state LIHTCs, causing the price to go up from 65 cents to 75 cents per dollar of state tax credit. This bump in price could mean one extra housing development, or about 100 more affordable homes, per year.

The second housing bill that passed, HB79, establishes a homeownership revolving fund, which was funded with a small initial amount of \$1 million. This

could help Habitat for Humanity, Self-Help Housing Corporation, or some other low-income homeownership program to get a project going that otherwise wouldn’t have enough resources. However, a \$1 million investment is only enough to catalyze a couple dozen homes at best.

Hawai‘i needs more than 35,000 homes in the next five years that are affordable for households earning below \$100,000 a year.¹⁵ These bills, combined with LIHTC projects already underway, might get us 15–20 percent of the way there. However, that still leaves at least 80 percent of Hawai‘i’s housing need unaddressed.

Large-scale public investments in both infrastructure and housing construction are needed to end the housing shortage, and neither materialized this past year.

2021 AFFORDABLE HOUSING LEGISLATION

Number	Purpose	Outcome
HB79	Establishes an affordable homeownership revolving fund to provide loans for the development of affordable homeownership housing.	Signed into law as Act 227, July 6, 2021
HB80	Allows a wider pool of taxpayers to purchase Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to increase competition and reduce the cost of developing housing, lowering the cost of housing.	Signed into law as Act 226, July 6, 2021
HB131	Allows a wider pool of taxpayers to purchase Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to increase competition and reduce the cost of developing housing, lowering the cost of housing.	Died in FIN; HB80 passed instead

Number	Purpose	Outcome
HB606	Authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds with the funds to be deposited into the dwelling unit revolving fund and the rental housing revolving fund.	Died in conference committee
HB981	Prohibits discrimination in rental housing based on participation in a Section 8 housing choice program or any permanent supportive housing program.	Died in JHA
HB1132	Authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds for the construction of phase I of a senior affordable housing project on Hawai'i Public Housing Authority property on the island of O'ahu.	Died in conference committee
HB1376	Amends the landlord-tenant code to provide protections for tenants, especially those that have lost income due to COVID-19.	Signed into law as Act 57, June 16, 2021
HB1390	Prohibits discrimination in rental housing based on participation in a section 8 housing choice program or any permanent supportive housing program.	Deffered in HSG
SB36	Prohibits discrimination in rental housing based on participation in a section 8 housing choice program or any permanent supportive housing program.	Died in JHA
SB302	Allows a wider pool of taxpayers to purchase Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to increase competition and reduce the cost of developing housing, lowering the cost of housing.	Deffered in HSG
SB659	Allows a wider pool of taxpayers to purchase Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to increase competition and reduce the cost of developing housing, lowering the cost of housing.	Died in conference committee
SB866	Temporarily exempts affordable housing projects by the Hawai'i Housing and Finance Development Corporation from certain state and county fees.	Deffered in FIN
SB867	Extends the state low-income housing tax credit for six years.	Died in FIN
SB1135	Amends "source of income" discrimination in rental transactions.	Died in a joint JDC and WAM hearing
SB1388	Amends the landlord-tenant code to provide protections for tenants, especially those that have lost income due to COVID-19.	Died in CPC; HB1376 passed instead

FOOD SECURITY

IN ANTI-HUNGER POLICY, a bill (SB512) was passed to make it easier to administer the statewide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) incentive known as DA BUX.

SNAP incentives pay for half the cost of locally grown produce to the retailer, so SNAP users effectively pay only half the sticker price on healthy, fresh, local products. SB512 removes the \$10/day cap on purchases and allows for the purchase of local healthy protein in addition to fruits and vegetables.

The bill originally had an appropriation

in it that would have been used as a match for a federal grant, but the appropriation was removed. This spurred an intensive fundraising effort to raise the match for federal funds to keep the program running.

Another priority piece of anti-hunger legislation (SB1250) would have provided emergency funding to food banks and other food assistance programs to purchase directly from farmers during times of crisis. Despite making it through the Senate with dozens of pages of supportive testimony, it died in the House without any hearings.



2021 ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION

Number	Purpose	Outcome
HB203	Authorizes general obligation bonds to fund construction costs of a water storage and distribution system on Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) agricultural lands in Wahiawā, O'ahu.	Died in FIN
HB767	Transfers the Hawai'i farm to school program from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Education and establishes a goal of at least 30% locally-sourced food served in public schools by 2030.	Signed into law as Act 175, July 2, 2021
HB817	Establishes benchmarks for state departments to ensure that a certain percentage of the produce purchased by each department consists of fresh, local agricultural products.	Signed into law as Act 176, July 2, 2021
SB512	Removes the \$10 per visit per day cap on the Double Up food bucks program. Specifies that healthy proteins are eligible purchases under the program.	Signed into law as Act 177, July 2, 2021
SB1250	Establishes the Hawai'i emergency food assistance program and appropriates moneys for the program to provide food to certain residents during governor-declared states of emergency.	Died in PDP

HEALTHCARE



2021 HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Number	Purpose	Outcome
HB314	Requires that providers of health or human services that receive state funds file annual financial reports and that the reports be disclosed to DOTAX.	Deffered in JHA
SB1147	Establishes multiple regulations on flavored tobacco products and e-cigarettes.	Died in HHH

NATIVE HAWAIIAN EQUITY



DURING THE 2021 SESSION, Hawai'i Appleseed took an interest in legislation that would improve the data accountability of state agencies. To kick off the session, Appleseed held a virtual informational briefing in partnership with Papa Ola Lōkahi and hosted by the Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs and the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs.

This briefing highlighted the findings of the Hawai'i Budget & Policy Center report "[Data Justice: About Us, By Us, For Us](#)," which was released in February 2021. The report provided ideas on policy to improve practices of disaggregating data. Utilizing the data justice report, Appleseed submitted testimony in support of a pair of

resolutions (SCR5 / HCR3) and a bill (SB742).

The resolutions seek to improve data collection and reporting practices by certain state departments; namely, practices that disaggregate data for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and develop procedures in partnership with certain stakeholders.

SB742 requires county police departments to collect data on police stops, use of force, and arrests for the purpose of building transparency and improving internal accountability and data analysis practices. While the bill did not focus solely on concerns of Native Hawaiians, the original language failed to explicitly outline practices of disaggregating data for

Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders. This bill passed the Senate, but failed to be heard in the House.

Because of our efforts on SB742, Hawai'i Appleseed was invited to legislative planning sessions on criminal justice reform that included the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Hawai'i, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), and the Civil Beat Law Center for the Public Interest.

In addition, Hawai'i Appleseed attended legislative planning meetings with organizations serving Native Hawaiians, which provided an opportunity for us to add our signature to letters advocating for legislation that would increase equity for Native Hawaiians.

2021 NATIVE HAWAIIAN EQUITY LEGISLATION

Number	Purpose	Outcome
HB202	Authorizes a court to expunge the records of a person for certain offenses if they are substantially related to the person's homeless status.	Deffered in HHH
HB204	Appropriates funding for OHA during the upcoming fiscal biennium.	Signed into law as Act 29, May 28, 2021
HCR3	Recognizes the importance of 21st century data governance for fact-based policy making.	Died in JHA; SCR5 adopted instead
HCR112	Declares racism to be a public health crisis.	Adopted by the Hawai'i State Legislature
SB321	Requires state agencies that collect receipts for public lands to transfer 20% to OHA every quarter; returns certain moneys previously claimed as overpayments to the office.	Died in WAL
SB389	Appropriates funding for OHA during the upcoming fiscal biennium.	Died in WAM; HB204 passed instead
SB391	Authorizes a court to expunge the records of a person for certain offenses if they are substantially related to the person's homeless status.	Died in JDC
SB742	Requires each county police department to collect certain data regarding police stops, uses of force, and arrests, and submit to the legislature annual reports.	Died in JHA
SB1334	Lifts restrictions on housing development for Kaka'ako properties owned by OHA.	Died in WAL
SCR5	Recognizes the importance of 21st century data governance for fact-based policy making.	Adopted by the Hawai'i State Legislature

LOOKING FORWARD

THE 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

was the second in a row to fall under the long shadow of COVID-19. But crises also provide opportunity for meaningful progress for Hawai'i's working families—if the opportunities are seized. We can't afford to continue to squander these opportunities as we did this past session.

The legislature, with the support of service-providers like those in our [PHOCUSED](#) network, and with a push from advocates, staved off many of the worst program cuts and saved some critical services. This was only possible because the federal government included resources for our state in federal relief funding, which is not sustainable over the long term. We need our own state legislators and leaders to fill these financial gaps through progressive taxes, and to generate a more robust safety net.

Given the legislature's reluctance to find ways to fund the transformational change Hawai'i's people need, the level of austerity our state would have experienced had Hawai'i not received federal relief funding would likely have been disastrous.

If we want to move past the suffering of our pre-pandemic status quo, we need to learn the lessons surrounding the importance of government spending, fueled by an equitable tax system. We need more legislators to support the tax fairness and economic justice policies that will allow our people to thrive.

Looking ahead, some legislators have expressed interest in pursuing these policies next session, which leaves us cautiously optimistic. However, any



policies passed next session will take a full year to kick in, likely leaving Hawai'i's working families, the [A.L.I.C.E.](#) population that lawmakers point to as the main group they are trying to help, stuck with the effects of the current status quo until 2023 or later.

Pre-pandemic, we had already reached a point at which our economic model was not sustainable for local families. That situation isn't going to improve without lawmakers making serious changes in state policy. We cannot continue to rely on low-wage jobs in service industry positions to power our economy while we allow

more and more wealth to be trapped at the top of the system.

More than 40 years of data and research have shown that wealth concentrated at the top does not trickle down to those of us toward the bottom. Rather, it is through government investments in our communities and good, livable wages in decent jobs that economic prosperity is democratized to all. When that happens, the downward economic spiral we find ourselves in will reverse direction: We will have created a system in which every person has the opportunity to live a full, rewarding life here in Hawai'i.

ENDNOTES

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