



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 13, 2023

### Media Contact:

Will Caron

Communications Director

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice

808-387-4920

[will@hiappleseed.org](mailto:will@hiappleseed.org)

Hawai'i's low wages relative to its cost of living put a serious strain on society, local economy

HONOLULU, Hawai'i — Despite working hard and actively supporting our local economy, more than half of Hawai'i's households are living paycheck to paycheck, and are one financial hardship away from slipping into poverty. This is bad news for the resiliency of our economy and the wellbeing of our society.

In a new report, "[The High Cost of Low Wages](#)," Hawai'i Appleseed researchers demonstrate how chronically low wages have prevented Hawai'i's working families from thriving, and outline the significant cost that poverty exacts from these families, from future generations, and from all of us. The report also identifies policies that can help to resolve the root problems that cause poverty.

"Hawai'i's low wages threaten to lead our society toward an untenable situation in which our economy can no longer be supported by a working class that has been squeezed out and denied the opportunity to thrive," said Hawai'i Appleseed senior policy analyst Devin Thomas.

The causes of poverty are many, but here in Hawai'i much of it is driven by our high cost of basic needs, including housing, healthcare and food, as well as the growing share of low-wage, low-opportunity jobs. The impacts of poverty can be especially detrimental to children. Living in a low-wage household has a permanent impact on a child's success as an adult, and this impact carries over from one generation to the next.

The failure of low-wage jobs to provide economic stability can perpetuate a cycle of intergenerational poverty that keeps families trapped in poverty. This lack of economic mobility imposes a high cost on our keiki through loss of future economic productivity, poorer health outcomes, and less educational attainment.

“Fortunately, policymakers have at their disposal highly targeted policy interventions that can help to short-circuit the cycle of poverty and help Hawai‘i’s children from low-income families ladder-up on their journey to economic success,” said Appleseed deputy director Will White.

Specifically, the report advocates for legislative investment in proven economic supports, such as creating a state-level Child Tax Credit that will help low-income families cope with Hawai‘i’s high cost of raising a family.

“In addition, the state and counties should continue to make public investments in the construction of income-restricted affordable housing, so Hawai‘i’s low-income families can afford to continue to live and work here,” added White.

[Download the full report.](#)

###

*Hawai‘i Appleseed envisions a Hawai‘i that puts its people first—a Hawai‘i where everyone can meet their basic needs while living happy, healthy and creative lives. We advocate for economic justice for and with Hawai‘i’s people.*

*The Hawai‘i Budget & Policy Center is a program of Hawai‘i Appleseed. HBPC’s mission is to ensure that our state and local economic policies increase opportunity for all residents. We do this by analyzing and understanding the implications of tax and budget decisions and making sure that the public and policy-makers are informed through strategic communications, coalitions, and key partners.*