



HAWAI'I APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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REPORT EXPLORES SOLUTIONS TO SENIOR HUNGER IN HAWAI'I

To effectively address the problem, policymakers need to place the issue of senior hunger into a holistic framework that understands the interplay between public health, economic justice and social capital.

THE ISSUE OF SENIOR HUNGER is complex, and is often a symptom of deeper flaws in the structure of our economy, our society, and of our food systems themselves. In a new report titled “Feeding Our Kūpuna,” Hawai'i Appleseed examines the issue of senior hunger: why it exists, who is at risk, and what policymakers can do about it. The report is available at hiappleseed.org/publications/feeding-our-kupuna.

Although Hawai'i has made strides to address hunger in recent years, current estimates place the rate of food insecurity among Hawai'i seniors between 5 percent and nearly 10 percent. Even using the more conservative estimate, this means that more than 16,700 Hawai'i seniors are at risk of going hungry.

Fortunately, the means of addressing food insecurity are within our reach. Federal safety net programs can be incredibly powerful tools if we use them effectively. However, solutions will need to go beyond expanding access.

“We must also identify remedies that acknowledge the importance of nutrition and that address the root cause of food insecurity: systemic poverty,” said Daniela Kittinger, Appleseed Director of Anti-Hunger Initiatives. “These three components: access, nutrition, and community resilience, must all be put in place together to make long lasting, systemic change.”

The recommendations in the report include specific actions for improving access to federal nutrition programs, but also for connecting these programs to our communities in ways that improve cohesion and health and keep economic capital circulating in our local economy.

“While streamlining access to public benefits is important, we must also prioritize actions that connect food producers to local markets, and connect seniors to their communities,” said Kittinger. “As a state, we should harness these tools to ensure our kūpuna have opportunities to stay connected with their communities. With better coordination, and through better leveraging of available resources, we can strengthen our hunger safety net and minimize the number of seniors in Hawai'i that experience food insecurity.”

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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.