

**LATE**



## **TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII**

**COMMITTEE REFERRAL: AGR**

**MARCH 20, 2024**

**HCR 43/HR 32, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN TO STRENGTHEN FOOD SECURITY FOR LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES IN HAWAII.**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

The Democratic Party of Hawaii supports HCR 43/HR 32, which requests the Department of Agriculture to develop a strategic plan to strengthen food security for low-income communities in Hawaii.

Food security is a fundamental human right and a critical component of public health and well-being. Hawaii's Aloha+ Challenge established a goal of increasing access to labor and land resources to support production, processing, distribution, and consumption of local food by 2030, with an overall target of 20 to 30 percent of food consumed in Hawaii being grown locally. Additionally, the state's Sustainable Hawaii Initiative set forth a target of doubling local food production by 2020. Yet, low-income communities in Hawaii face significant challenges in accessing nutritious and affordable food, leading to food insecurity and related health disparities.

Promoting local food production and enhancing food security in underserved areas can contribute to better health and well-being, economic security, and environmental sustainability. Therefore, we support developing a strategic plan to increase food security and food production in low-income communities, which requires a comprehensive approach that addresses issues related to food access,

affordability, land use, agricultural production, education and vocational training programs, and community engagement.

Strategic planning efforts should involve collaboration among government agencies, community organizations, agricultural stakeholders, and other relevant entities to effectively leverage resources and expertise, bringing public and private sector entities together to cooperate in helping to end hunger in the islands. Implementing targeted strategies tailored to the unique needs and priorities of different communities can maximize the impact of food security initiatives and ensure equitable access to nutritious food for all residents. Furthermore, investing in programs and initiatives that support local food production, such as community gardens, urban farms, farmers' markets, and agricultural education programs, can strengthen food systems and reduce dependence on imported food.

No one should go hungry in Hawai'i. For the sake of working families across our island home, we must couple our focus on increasing local food production with an emphasis on meeting the food security needs of our most economically vulnerable populations and those who live in rural and remote areas.

Mahalo nui loa,

**Kris Coffield**

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## HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a  
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &  
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Community Health  
Worker Initiatives

COVID-19 Response

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free  
Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Hui

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &  
Community Living

Public Health Workforce  
Development

Date: March 19, 2024

To: Rep. Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair  
Rep. Kirstin Kahaloe, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Re: HR 32 Requesting the Department of Agriculture to Develop a Strategic  
Plan to Strengthen Food Security for Low-income Communities in Hawai'i

Hrg: Wednesday, March 20, 2024 10:15 AM

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Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Institute<sup>i</sup> appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **Support of HR 32**, which requests the department of agriculture to develop a strategic plan to strengthen food security for low-income communities in Hawai'i.

### Significant unmet need.

Increasing access to local fresh produce for low-income residents is vital for fostering equitable health outcomes and enhancing community well-being. Fresh fruits and vegetables are fundamental to a nutritious diet, which is directly linked to reduced risks of stress, depression and chronic diseases.<sup>ii</sup> However, low-income communities often face barriers to accessing these nutritious foods such as higher costs, limited availability in neighborhood stores, and lack of adequate transportation to where fresh produce is more abundant. By improving access, communities can address income constraints, food deserts, and ensure all residents have the opportunity to make healthier food choices.

### Helping the local economy.

Increasing the ways in which low-income residents access and purchase local foods also positively impacts our local growers by increasing the market within the state. Growers financially benefit through increased sales and these funds circulate throughout our economy. We can help those in need, our producers, and our economy by holistically addressing food insecurity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nate Hix'.

Nate Hix  
Social Impact Policy Manager  
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

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<sup>i</sup> The Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, formerly known as the Obesity Prevention Task Force, was created by the legislature in 2012 and is comprised of over 60 statewide organizations. The HEAL Coalition works to make recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and health care environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/what-are-the-implications-of-food-insecurity-for-health-and-health-care/>

**RECEIVED**  
**Date & Time**  
Mar 19, 2024, 1:31 pm



**LATE**

March 19, 2024

Senators Kapela, Amato, Ganaden, Hussey-Burdick, Marten, Perruso, Tam and Ward  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 South Beretania St  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Senators:

**Re: HR 32 – Strengthen food security for Low-income families– Support**

The Church State Council is the oldest public interest advocacy and legal services organization in the Western United States devoted exclusively to issues of liberty of conscience and religion and the separation of church and state. We are a Seventh-day Adventist organization serving a five-state western region (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada & Utah) for the Adventist Church. We are writing this letter of support for HR 32.

The Church State Council supports legislation that helps to bring about equality. All Americans are entitled to the fundamental rights of conscience, religious freedom and the pursuit of happiness.

Everyone needs nutritious food to thrive. And, while people are working hard to provide for themselves and their families, approximately 49 million people—that's one in six people in the U.S.—still relied on food assistance.

Hunger can affect people from all walks of life. Millions of people in America are just one job loss, missed paycheck, or medical emergency away from hunger. But hunger doesn't affect everyone equally - some groups like children, seniors, and people of color face hunger at much higher rates.

Thank you for your important work in authoring this measure. We have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our vulnerable citizens.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dennis Seaton'.

Dennis Seaton  
Director of Government Relations

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