
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that one in three
2 households in Hawaii is struggling to secure consistent access
3 to food, and that two-thirds of these families are experiencing
4 the most extreme version of this - reducing food intake,
5 skipping meals, or going whole days without eating. This data
6 paints a sobering picture of families in distress, underscoring
7 the need for immediate action to restore the basic dignity of
8 nourishment to every household across the islands.

9 The legislature further finds that the crisis
10 disproportionately affects the most vulnerable in Hawaii: the
11 keiki. Thirty-four per cent of children in Hawaii are growing
12 up in food-insecure homes, some enduring entire days without a
13 meal. When experiencing hunger, keiki can face increased risk
14 of cognitive issues, aggression, anxiety, behavioral problems,
15 depression, and suicidal ideation; and in households with
16 children, food insecurity among parents and caretakers is
17 especially high at forty-five per cent. For families facing



1 hunger, fresh, healthy produce is often one of the first things
2 removed from grocery lists, negatively affecting long-term
3 health.

4 The legislature additionally finds that this emergency also
5 disproportionately impacts Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island,
6 Hispanic, and Filipino households, with food insecurity in these
7 households ranging from thirty-six to forty-seven per cent.
8 These disparities are a reflection of longstanding inequities in
9 access to resources, economic opportunity, and essential
10 services. The legislature believes that the State's communities
11 should not bear this burden alone.

12 The legislature recognizes that Hawaii's food banks worked
13 with over five hundred agency partners, such as schools,
14 community-based nonprofits, churches, community centers, and
15 food pantries, to distribute more than twenty-nine million meals
16 in 2025 to communities across the State. These numbers are as
17 high as during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the
18 support systems available during the COVID-19 pandemic are no
19 longer in place.

20 The legislature also finds that, to bridge the gap between
21 the State's food banks and their partners to bring fresh,



1 Hawaii-grown produce to families, food banks have partnered with
2 five hundred seventy-five local farms and food hubs to create a
3 consistent market for Hawaii agricultural producers,
4 strengthening the State's community food systems and creating a
5 healthier, more resilient Hawaii. For example, the Hawaii
6 Foodbank invested over \$13,000,000 in Hawaii-grown produce over
7 the last five years, which, using the local foods economic
8 multiplier, equates to an investment of nearly \$20,000,000 in
9 the State's local economy.

10 The legislature notes that, as the cost of importing food
11 continues to rise, increasing the State's reliance on local
12 agriculture is not only a sustainable solution but also a
13 necessary one. Farmers across Hawaii have the potential to grow
14 more fresh, nutritious food that can directly serve those most
15 in need. By strengthening the connection between local farmers
16 and community food systems, the State can reduce its dependence
17 on imports and ensure that more families have access to
18 Hawaii-grown produce like Okinawan sweet potato, choy sum, bok
19 choy, long beans, breadfruit, kalo, and more.

20 The legislature believes that programs that encourage
21 partnerships between farmers and food assistance programs can



1 make a profound impact. By investing in Hawaii-grown
2 agricultural producers, the State can support not only local
3 farmers but also the communities they feed. This approach
4 aligns with the values of mālama 'āina--caring for the land--and
5 ensures that the State honors the deep connection between the
6 land and the people of Hawaii. Uplifting local farmers will
7 also uplift the entire community, fostering a more resilient
8 food system that can withstand future challenges.

9 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish and
10 appropriate funds for the Hawaii farm to families program to
11 fund food banks in the State to purchase, store, and transport
12 fresh, Hawaii-grown or -produced food to food insecure
13 communities. This program will serve the State's food needs,
14 provide Hawaii's agricultural producers with a market to support
15 their operations, and keep funds circulating within the State to
16 boost the local economy.

17 SECTION 2. Chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
18 amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and
19 to read as follows:

20 "PART . HAWAII FARM TO FAMILIES PROGRAM

21 §346- Definitions. For the purposes of this part:



1 "Food bank" has the same meaning as in title 7 United
2 States Code section 7501(5).

3 "Fresh, Hawaii-grown or -produced food" means fruits,
4 vegetables, nuts, coffee, eggs, poultry and poultry products,
5 livestock products, milk and milk products, aquacultural and
6 maricultural products, and horticultural products that are one
7 hundred per cent grown, raised, and harvested in Hawaii.

8 **§346- Hawaii farm to families program.** (a) There is
9 established the Hawaii farm to families program to be
10 administered by the department. Under the program, the
11 department shall provide funds to food banks located in the
12 State to facilitate consistent supply chains of fresh, Hawaii-
13 grown or -produced food to food insecure communities.

14 (b) Food banks that receive support pursuant to this
15 section shall use the funds to purchase, store, and transport
16 fresh, Hawaii-grown or -produced food in the State to recipients
17 at no cost to the recipients.

18 **§346- Rules.** The department shall adopt rules pursuant
19 to chapter 91 necessary for the purposes of this part."

20 SECTION 3. The department of human services shall submit a
21 report to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the



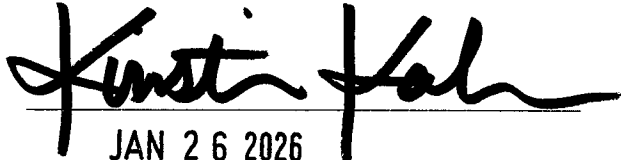
1 convening of the regular sessions of 2027 and 2028 that contains
2 a summary of the activities of the Hawaii farm to families
3 program established under this Act.

4 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
6 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
7 the administration of the Hawaii farm to families program and
8 provision of funds to food banks through the program.

9 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
10 human services for the purposes of this Act.

11 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

12 INTRODUCED BY:


JAN 26 2026



H.B. NO. 2208

Report Title:

Department of Human services; Food Security; Hawaii Farm to Families Program; Reports; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes and appropriates funds for the Hawaii Farm to Families Program under the Department of Human Services to alleviate food shortages in the State. Requires reports to the Legislature before the Regular Sessions of 2027 and 2028.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

