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# 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 Islander,  
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 grants 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 grant funds to purchase, store, and  
16 transport fresh, Hawaii-grown or -produced food in the State to  
17 recipients at no cost to the recipients.

18 (c) Requests for grants shall be submitted to the  
19 department in accordance with rules adopted by the department.  
20 Each request shall at a minimum state:

21 (1) The name of the food bank requesting grant funds;



- 1           (2) The purpose for the grant;
- 2           (3) The service to be supported by the grant;
- 3           (4) The target group to be benefited;
- 4           (5) The cost of the grant; and
- 5           (6) That the grant shall be used for activities that are
- 6                 consistent with the purposes of the Hawaii farm to
- 7                 families program.

8           (d) A food bank applying for a grant under this section  
9 shall meet the following standards; specifically, the grant  
10 shall only be awarded if:

- 11           (1) The applicant is licensed or accredited, in accordance
- 12                 with federal, state, or county laws, regulations,
- 13                 rules, or ordinances, to conduct the activities or
- 14                 provide the services for which a grant is awarded;
- 15           (2) The applicant agrees to comply with all applicable
- 16                 federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination
- 17                 against any person on the basis of race, color,
- 18                 national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, sexual
- 19                 orientation, or disability;



- 1           (3) The applicant agrees to comply with applicable  
2           federal, state, and county laws, regulations, rules,  
3           or ordinances;
- 4           (4) The applicant agrees that the grant shall not be used  
5           for purposes of entertainment or lobbying activities;
- 6           (5) All activities undertaken with funds received shall  
7           comply with all applicable federal, state, and county  
8           laws, regulations, rules, and ordinances necessary to  
9           conduct the activities or provide the services for  
10          which a grant is awarded;
- 11          (6) The applicant agrees to allow the department,  
12          legislative committees and their staff, and the  
13          auditor full access to their records, reports, files,  
14          and other related documents and information for  
15          purposes of monitoring, measuring the effectiveness,  
16          and ensuring the proper expenditure of the grant;
- 17          (7) The applicant agrees to comply with any additional  
18          requirements imposed by the source of funds; and
- 19          (8) The applicant meets any additional standards  
20          prescribed in rules adopted by the department.



1 (e) Each application for grant funds shall be reviewed in  
2 accordance with this section. Applications shall be submitted  
3 to the department on forms prescribed by the department and  
4 shall contain, at a minimum, the information required under this  
5 section. The department shall review each application to  
6 determine eligibility for grant funds and make a final decision  
7 on each request. The department shall inform each applicant of  
8 the disposition of the applicant's request. Any applicant  
9 denied grant funds may appeal the denial in accordance with the  
10 department's rules.

11 (f) The department shall not disburse grant funds approved  
12 unless a written contract is executed between the department and  
13 the recipient. The department shall develop and determine, in  
14 consultation with and subject to the review and approval of the  
15 attorney general, the specific contract form to be used.

16 (g) Every department grant contract shall be monitored by  
17 the department to ensure compliance with this part. Every  
18 department grant contract shall be evaluated annually to  
19 determine whether the grant attained the intended results in the  
20 manner contemplated.



1 (h) Any recipient who withholds or omits any material fact  
2 or deliberately misrepresents facts to the department shall be  
3 in violation of this part. In addition to any other penalties  
4 provided by law, any recipient found by the department to have  
5 violated this part or the terms of its contract shall be  
6 prohibited from applying for any department grants for a period  
7 of five years from the date of termination.

8 (i) As used in this section, unless the context clearly  
9 requires otherwise:

10 "Applicant" means a food bank applying for a grant.

11 "Recipient" means a food bank receiving a grant.

12 **§346- Rules.** The department shall adopt rules pursuant  
13 to chapter 91 necessary for the purposes of this part."

14 SECTION 3. The department of human services shall submit a  
15 report to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the  
16 convening of the regular sessions of 2029 and 2030 that contains  
17 a summary of the activities of the Hawaii farm to families  
18 program established under this Act.

19 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general  
20 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
21 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for



1 the administration of the Hawaii farm to families program and  
2 provision of funds to food banks through the program.

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

5 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval;  
6 provided that section 2 shall take effect on July 1, 2028.



**Report Title:**

DHS; Food Security; Hawaii Farm to Families Program; Grants;  
Reports; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes and appropriates funds in the form of grants 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. (SD1)

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

