

Advancing the Right to Food in Honolulu, Hawai'i

From Charter Amendment to State Resolution:
Opportunities for Organizers



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Why This Matters

This is not about a lack of food.

- Food insecurity is universal
- Accelerating rates of hunger among families w/children
- Cost of living crisis deepening
- Climate-related disaster risk rising
- Supply chains increasingly fragile

*Right to Food reframes the issue
from charity to accountability.*



Why Hawai'i Is Unique

Our island is abundant.

- Most expensive place to live in the United States
- Most isolated inhabited land masses in the world
- ~90% of food imported
- Highly vulnerable to shipping disruption
- Disaster preparedness is a priority

Food security is public health & safety issue.



Cultural & Legal Foundation

This is not a radical idea. It is ancestral.

Before the 1893 overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai'i:

- Governance centered on common good
- Leadership accountable for wellbeing of the people
- Land held in communal stewardship

Foundational values:

- Aloha 'Āina — caring for that which feeds us
- Ahupua'a — mauka to makai resource management

Public Law 103-150
103d Congress

Joint Resolution

To acknowledge the 100th anniversary of the January 17, 1893 overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii, and to offer an apology to Native Hawaiians on behalf of the United States for the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii.

Whereas, prior to the arrival of the first Europeans in 1778, the Native Hawaiian people lived in a highly organized, self-sufficient, subsistent social system based on communal land tenure with a sophisticated language, culture, and religion;

Food as a collective responsibility has deep precedent.

HNL City & County Charter *Amendment Opportunity*

- Reviewed only once every 10 years
- Change the rule book for those in power

The solutions are local.

- Municipality is closest to infrastructure
- City is already operating food access programs

Lack of cohesive legal framework without explicit mention of Food in Charter

Existing Infrastructure:

- O'ahu Good Food Program (OER)
- O'ahu Food System Plan (CCSR)
- Community Garden Program (DPR)
- Transforming Hawai'i's Food Systems Summit (UH West)



Parallel Momentum Across Counties

This is a statewide movement
with local efforts
as unique as the islands.

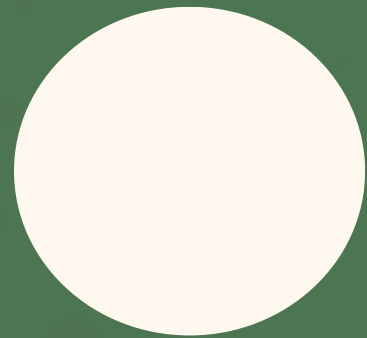
Hawai'i Food Bank Hui
Food Insecurity Report
acknowledges Right to
Food

Maui Food and
Nutrition Security Plan

County-level
food access
coordinators &
summits

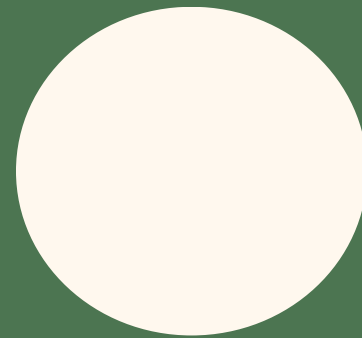
Grassroots First

Put it on the ballot & we will get it passed!



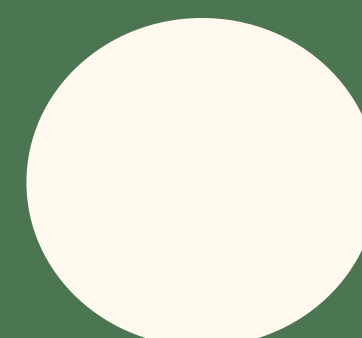
Community Coalition

- Nation of Hawai'i
- Waimānalo Neighborhood Board
- Sustainable Coastlines
- Farmers, growers, youth



Institutional Allies

- HI Public Health Institute
- Hawai'i Food Bank Hui
- City departments
- Ke o Mau Center (UH West)
- Civil Beat/HPR



Commission Collaborators

- Identifying champions
- Keep eyes on the process
- Win for everyone
- Shared values as common ground

& Everyone who eats!



Challenges We Face

Process Barriers

Strategic Challenge

Convince Commission → Convince Voters

Opaque commission
procedures in a
compressed,
inconsistent timeline

No clear engagement
protocol with influence
of titled officials over
community voices

Resistance from
institutional allies who
only “support the
principle, not the policy”

Progress Report

*Momentum
is building!*

Charter Commission

- Proposal submitted within 2-month timeline - most submitted proposal
- Advanced past initial read with numerous testimonies in support
- Now in Phase Two Commission review - next steps are unclear, solidifying our message
- Once on the Ballot will broaden audience - require marketing strategy, present a slate of proposals

State Resolution

- Right to Food resolution pending introduction by Representative Tina Grandinetti
- Enhancing county-level efforts and Interagency Food Systems Working Group
- Framed as cost-of-living solution and resilience strategy

The Proposal

Section 2-102. Purposes - “All city powers shall be used to serve and advance the general welfare, safety, and aspirations of its inhabitants in a sustainable manner and promote stewardship of natural resources for present and future generations. All city powers shall be administered in a transparent manner that is inclusive and shall encourage full participation by the citizenry in the process of governance.”

ADD to Section 2-102: ***“The residents of the City and County of Honolulu shall have the inalienable right to nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food, including access to traditional and locally grown food sources, necessary to maintain health, dignity, and well-being.”***

Embed food access as a priority into:

- Department of Emergency Management
- Office of Climate Change, Sustainability & Resilience
- Department of Community Services
- Office of Economic Revitalization

How this structure works

Our power is in implementation.

- Establishes “Zero Hunger” as measurable objective
- Mobilizes resources and aligns budgets with a coherent strategy
- Integrates local food production into emergency planning and community resilience
- Prioritizes food access as public health issue
- Revitalizes Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander cultural practices

Parallel proposal: Food Security Fund

(Hawai'i Food Bank initiative)

Right to Food = Vision + Food Security Fund = Mechanism

“We have to feed the movement today, while we fight for the system we deserve.” - MetroCaring, Denver

Messaging That *Resonates*



Effective Framing

- Cost of living solution
- Climate Change Resilience
- Support local farmers
- Public health investment
- Cultural revitalization



Address Common Concerns

- Is it enforceable?
- Is it a liability?
- Is it expensive?
- Is it necessary?
- Is it helpful?



Our Response

- Rights language shapes governance priorities
- Sets policymaking foundation, not cause of action
- Enables cohesive budgeting
- Aligns existing departments/programs
- Strengthens measurable goals

Our message is simple: “Everyone deserves to eat.”

Opportunities for *Organizers*

*Food is not a
commodity.*

*Food is
our collective
responsibility.*

- Start with values, not legal theory
- Amplify Cultural Legacy
- Commissioners as collaborators
- Tie food to cost of living
- Pair vision with implementation
- Anticipate skepticism early
- Show up in numbers
- Prepare for ballot-level messaging



Mahalo!

Earth-Innovation.com/Right-to-Food

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH!

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