

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

UNDER THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN



The ongoing coronavirus pandemic is affecting virtually every aspect of life in Hawaii and across the country. These are challenging and uncertain times, but it's important to recognize and reaffirm that we are all in this together.

As we continue to take the difficult, but necessary steps to confront the spread of COVID-19, Congress has passed meaningful relief for affected families and businesses. The American Rescue Plan, signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021, provides billions of dollars in aid for Hawaii's families and communities.

This legislation will help Hawaii re-open schools safely; speed up vaccine distribution; expand access to health care; and provide immediate and long-term relief to those in need.

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Congress recently approved an additional \$130 billion for K-12 schools, \$40 billion for colleges and universities, and \$40 billion for child care programs. With this funding, programs and schools will receive much needed resources to make necessary improvements to reopen safely for children, students, teachers, principals, and other school personnel. Learn more about these resources below.

K-12 SCHOOLS

Congress approved an additional \$130 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF). With this funding, K-12 schools will receive resources to promote social distancing through reduced class sizes and modified classrooms, provide personal protective equipment (PPE), and make other necessary improvements to help reopen safely for students, teachers, principals, and other school personnel. Resources will also be available for activities to address learning loss caused by the pandemic.

Hawaii schools are expected to receive around \$412.3 million through the ESSERF.

Learn more and find the latest updates on the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) K-12 relief programs on its website [here](#). You can also find more information about special education programs [here](#).

Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE): HIDOE continues to provide updated information on its website. Find the latest updates [here](#).

Grab-and-Go Meals: Earlier this year, the Biden administration extended flexibility for U.S. Department of Agricultural (USDA) school meal programs that has allowed HIDOE to provide Grab-and-Go meals. More information about Grab-and-Go meals can be found on HIDOE's website [here](#).

HIGHER EDUCATION

Congress also approved an additional \$40 billion for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF). Last year, colleges and universities shed 650,000 jobs due to COVID-19. These resources will help schools keep staff and faculty on their payroll and provide students with emergency assistance to address their child care, housing, education and related expenses.

Hawaii schools should receive around \$100.0 million through the HEERF.

Learn more and find the latest updates on ED's higher education relief programs on its website [here](#).

Loan Forbearance: Earlier this year, the Biden administration extended loan forbearance for federal student loans through September 30, 2021. Between now and then, student borrowers will not have to make loan payments on principal and interest for certain loans, and interest rates will be set to zero.

Recently, Congress clarified that borrowers will not have to pay taxes on this forbearance. You can find more information about loan forbearance on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) website [here](#). Further information is also available on ED's website [here](#).

Fraud Alert: ED will not ask you for a fee to suspend your payments. If someone asks you for money to process your information, it is likely a scam and you should report them on the Federal Trade Commission's website [here](#).

Borrowers with federally-backed loans are not eligible for loan forbearance, and should contact their loan servicers for questions about their loans. You can find your loan servicer [here](#).

Emergency Assistance for Students: College students may be eligible for emergency assistance (financial aid) through their schools to cover child care, housing, education, and related expenses. More information will be available in the coming weeks.

Pell Grants: Pell Grants provide financial assistance to working and middle class students. Congress recently expanded Pell Grants to more students. You can find more information [here](#).

Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF): PSLF allows student loan borrowers in certain public sector careers to receive loan forgiveness if they meet other program requirements. You can find more information [here](#).

University of Hawaii (UH): UH continues to provide updated information on its website. Find the latest updates [here](#).

CHILD CARE

Congress approved \$40 billion for child care programs—including \$25 billion for an emergency stabilization fund for child care providers, and \$15 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program (CCDBG). Funding will provide support for child care providers to help prevent further closures, and for child care workers to help ensure they do not continue to lose their jobs. It will also provide support for working families to help ensure they have access to quality, affordable child care.

Hawaii is expected to receive \$130 million for these programs in FY2021.

Separately, Congress approved \$1 billion for Head Start. Hawaii is expected to receive \$3.4 million for the program.

More information will be available in the coming weeks.



NUTRITION ASSISTANCE

ARP provided \$12 billion to hungry families in need through important nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (Pandemic EBT), and senior nutrition services.

SNAP: SNAP benefits have received an emergency increase of 15 percent for all participants – an average of \$27 more per month for each participant. ARP extended this increase through September 30, 2021. First time applicants can now apply for benefits online here.

WIC: WIC vouchers for fruits and vegetables are increased to \$35 per month for four months under ARP. Prospective recipients can check for eligibility using this tool, but to officially verify eligibility please contact your local WIC clinic location directly by phone. Contact information can be found here.

*****Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions about these or other programs.*****