



Dawn Chang, Chair
Board of Land and Natural Resources
Department of Land and Natural Resources

September 21, 2023

Re: BLNR Agenda 09/22/23 Item D-2, Issuance of Direct Lease to Hawai'i Foodbank

Dear Chair Chang and Members of the Board:

Established in 1983, Hawai'i Foodbank is Hawai'i's leading hunger relief organization and the largest food bank in the State. We hold the Feeding America contract for Hawai'i, directly serving the islands of O'ahu and Kaua'i while partnering with The Food Basket to serve Hawai'i County and Maui Food Bank to serve Maui County. On the ground, we work with a network of more than 200 partner agencies to fulfill our mission to ensure that no one in our communities goes hungry.

As you are undoubtedly aware, food insecurity is a grave issue in Hawai'i. One in six Hawai'i residents will struggle with hunger this year, including one in four keiki. Hawai'i Foodbank sources food through donations, USDA commodity programs, and purchases to ensure our community has equitable access to healthy and safe food. Last year, we distributed a total of 17.7 million pounds of food—including 5 million pounds of fresh produce—to those we serve.

The Foodbank is still serving 50% more people than we did prior to the pandemic, and we expect that food insecurity levels will remain elevated for years to come. Worryingly, the number of families seeking food assistance continues to rise. The cost of groceries in Honolulu has increased by 25% in the last three years, and we are seeing more and more families at our distributions who have never needed food assistance before, but are simply unable to make ends meet.

Hawai'i Foodbank currently leases the land for our O'ahu warehouse in Māpunapuna, and we are very grateful to the State and DLNR for supporting our work and mission through the eleemosynary rental rate. The Foodbank entered into this lease in 1992 and subsequently built and recently renovated the warehouse from which we have operated ever since.

However, the Foodbank's work and scope have grown significantly. A recent analysis we commissioned predicts that we will need at least double our current dry storage capacity, as well as triple our current cold storage capacity, to meet our State's current and anticipated future needs efficiently. In addition, the Foodbank has signed an MOU with the City and County of Honolulu's Department of Emergency Management (DEM) as its mass feeding lead; our current location in the inundation zone may make it difficult to mount a response in the case of a major disaster.

This new potential location in Waipahu is ideal for the Foodbank's expansion, to build a new warehouse with expanded storage capacity and facilities specifically designed to meet the ongoing needs of our community. Its central location near the H1 and H2 freeway will increase access to us for agencies located in West O'ahu, Central O'ahu, and the North Shore, and its location outside of the inundation zone will provide important operational flexibility in the event of a major disaster. We respectfully request that the Board approve this lease, allowing us to significantly enhance our capacity and our ability to carry out our mission to nourish our community as we fight to end hunger in Hawai'i.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of our request, and look forward to hearing your thoughts.

With aloha,

Amy Miller Marvin
President and CEO, Hawai'i Foodbank