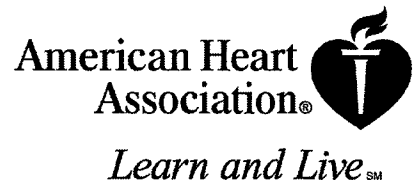


The American Heart
Association mission is:
To reduce disability and death
from cardiovascular diseases
and stroke.



Serving Hawaii

Testimony for SB 2136, "Relating To School Meals"

The American Heart Association supports the intent of SB 2136. I am attaching a copy of the Association's recently revised model legislation for school meals that we suggest be used as the basis for any changes to the Hawaii school menu plans, as well as for guidance on policies regarding snacks and beverages sold in schools.

The AHA also can offer volunteers who are among Hawaii's leading nutrition experts should their services be required in developing new nutrition policies for Hawaii public schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald B. Weisman
Hawaii Communications and Marketing/Government Affairs Director.

Serving Hawaii since 1948

For information on the AHA's
educational or research
programs, contact your
nearest AHA office,
or visit our web site at
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LATE

Please remember the American Heart Association in your will.



American Heart Association® | American Stroke Association®

Learn and Live.

AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTHY FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN SCHOOLS.

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2008*) *Beverage Standards*

- (1) Each local and regional board of education and the governing authority for each state charter school, interdistrict magnet school and endowed academy shall permit at elementary schools under its jurisdiction the sale of only the following beverages to students from any source, including, but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, and any fund-raising activities on school premises, whether or not school sponsored:
 - a. 100% water
 - b. 8 ounces, or less, of fat-free or low fat regular and flavored milk that contains no more than 150 kcal/ 8 ounces. This includes nutritionally equivalent milk alternatives as defined by USDA such as soy milk.
 - c. 8 ounces, or less, of 100% juice, which contains no added sweeteners and at least 10% of the recommended daily value for three or more vitamins and minerals, that contains no more than 120 kcal/ 8 ounces

- (2) Each local and regional board of education and the governing authority for each state charter school, interdistrict magnet school and endowed academy shall permit at middle schools under its jurisdiction the sale of only the following beverages to students from any source, including, but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, and any fund-raising activities on school premises, whether or not school sponsored:
 - a. 100% water
 - b. 10 ounces, or less, of fat-free or low fat regular and flavored milk that contains no more than 150 kcal / 8 ounces. This includes nutritionally equivalent milk alternatives as defined by USDA such as soy milk.
 - c. 10 ounces, or less, of 100% juice, which contains no added sweeteners and at least 10% of the recommended daily value for three or more vitamins and minerals, that contains no more than 120 kcal/ 8 ounces

- (3) Each local and regional board of education and the governing authority for each state charter school, interdistrict magnet school and endowed academy shall permit at high schools under its jurisdiction the sale of only the following beverages to students from any source, including, but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, and any fund-raising activities on school premises, whether or not school sponsored:
 - a. 100% water
 - b. 12 ounces, or less, of fat-free or low fat regular and flavored milk that contains no more than 150 kcal/ 8 ounces. This includes nutritionally equivalent milk alternatives as defined by USDA such as soy milk.
 - c. 12 ounces, or less, of 100% juice, which contains no added sweeteners and at least 10% of the recommended daily value for three or more vitamins and minerals, that contains no more than 120 kcal/ 8 ounces
 - d. No- or low-calorie beverages that contain no more than 10 kcal/ 8 ounces
 - e. 12 ounces, or less, of other drinks that contain no more than 66 kcal/ 8 ounces

- (4) If middle school and high school students have shared access to areas on a common campus or in common buildings, then the school community has the option to adopt the high school standard.

Sec. 2. (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2008): *Competitive Food Standards*

- (1) As used in this section:
 - a. "Entree" means a food that is generally regarded as being the primary food in a meal and includes, but is not limited to, sandwiches, burritos, pasta and pizza.
 - b. "Snack" means a food that is generally regarded as supplementing a meal and includes, but is not limited to, fruits, vegetables, yogurts (including drinkable yogurt and yogurt smoothies), puddings, soups, cheeses, snack chips, pretzels, crackers, popcorn, nuts, seeds, french fries, onion rings, pastries, dried meat snacks, granola bars, energy bars, breakfast bars, cookies, brownies, snack cakes, candy, doughnuts, cookies, ice cream frozen yogurt, frozen fruit bars, and other similar foods.
- (2) Within one year of implementation, the Department of Education shall publish a set of nutrition standards for food items that would be considered entrees if sold in the reimbursable meal program, but are sold a la carte as competitive foods.
- (3) All snacks, side items, treats, and desserts offered for sale as competitive foods in a public kindergarten through grade 12 school, shall, at a minimum, meet one of the following standards:
 - a. Fruits with no added sweeteners or vegetables which are non-fried. Fresh fruits and vegetables will have no calorie limits. If fruits and vegetables are packaged in their own juice or dried they must be less than 150 kcal/serving in elementary school, ≤ 80 kcal/serving in middle school, and less than 200 kcal/serving in high school.
 - b. Any reduced fat or part-skim cheese ≤ 1.5 oz.
 - c. Any one egg with no added fat or equal amount of egg equivalent with no added fat.
 - d. Any other food that meets all of the following criteria:
 - (1) $\leq 5\%$ of total calories from fat
 1. nuts, seeds and nut butters are exempt from this limitation and are permitted.
 - (2) $\leq 0\%$ of total calories from saturated fat or ≤ 1 gram of saturated fat.
 - (3) 0 grams trans fat as labeled
 - (4) $\leq 5\%$ sugar by weight
 - (5) ≤ 30 mg sodium
 1. Low-fat and fat-free dairy products can have ≤ 80 mg sodium
 2. Vegetables with sauce, and soups can have ≤ 80 mg sodium if they contain one or more of the following: ≥ 1 g fiber; or ≥ 1 g protein; or $\geq 10\%$ DV of Vitamin A, C, D, folate, calcium, magnesium, potassium, or iron; or $\geq 1/2$ serving (1/4 cup) of fruit or vegetables.
 - (6) If products are dairy, they must be non-fat or low-fat dairy.
 - (7) Meet 1 of the following calorie requirements:
 1. ≤ 100 kcal
 2. Vegetables with sauce and soups meeting (2) above can have 150 kcal if they contain two or more of the following: ≥ 1 g fiber; or ≥ 1 g protein; or $\geq 10\%$ DV of Vitamin A, C, E, folate, calcium, magnesium, potassium, or iron; or $\geq 1/2$ serving (1/4 cup) of fruit or vegetables:
 - a. ≤ 50 kcal for elementary schools
 - b. ≤ 80 kcal for middle school
 - c. ≤ 100 kcal for high school
 - (8) For individual serving packages, these nutritional guidelines are defined for a whole package as labeled on the package's Nutrition Facts panel. In the event that the food is bought in bulk but served individually, such as on an a la carte line, then the criteria apply to the label serving.

Sec. 3 (Effective July 1, 2008) *Time of Day:*

- (1) Food and beverage guidelines shall apply to items sold on school grounds or at school activities during the regular and extended school day when events are primarily under the control of the school or third parties on behalf of the school. The extended school day is defined as the time before or after the official school day that includes activities such as clubs, yearbook, band, and choir practice, student government, drama, sports practices, intramural sports, and childcare/latchkey programs. These guidelines shall also apply to food and beverages supplied by schools during official transportation to and from school and school sponsored activities, including but not limited to field trips and interscholastic sporting events.
- (2) These guidelines do not apply to school sponsored or school related bona fide fundraising activities that take place off of school grounds and not in transit to and from school. Nor do they apply to booster sales at school related events where parents and other adults are a significant part of an audience or are selling food as boosters either during intermission or immediately before or after such events. These school related events frequently occur during evenings and weekends. Examples of these events include but are not limited to interscholastic sporting events, school plays, and band concerts.

Section 4. *Review of Standards:*

- (1) The Department of Education shall review the standards at least every 5 years in conjunction with the revision of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and/or IOM revisions to Daily Reference Intakes or any other necessary revisions according to developing science. The Secretary may establish an advisory committee to advise the Department on updating the Nutrition Standards for Foods and Beverages for Schools. The members of the Advisory Committee shall be appointed by the Secretary and shall include individuals representing food and nutrition professionals, school officials such as school food service directors, principals or school board members, public health professionals, parents, and other individuals with relevant expertise in child health and nutrition. In reviewing or revising the nutrition standards and requirements under this section, the Secretary and the Advisory Committee shall take into consideration the positive and negative contributions of nutrients, ingredients, and foods (including calories, portion size, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and added sugars) to the diets of children and adolescents, evidence concerning the relationship between consumption of certain nutrients, ingredients, and foods with respect to the prevention of overweight, obesity, and other chronic illnesses, and recommendations made by authoritative scientific organizations concerning appropriate nutrition standards for foods sold outside the reimbursable meal programs in schools, the most effective manner in which to teach children and adolescents how to improve their dietary habits and the practicality and feasibility of implementation of potential modifications to the provisions regarding applicable foods and beverages.

Section 5. *Contracts:*

- (1) Sections 1 and 2 of this Act apply upon enactment to contracts entered into or extended on or after enactment of this Act. If a school district is operating under a contract entered into before the enactment of this Act, the local or regional board of education or governing authority for each state charter school, interdistrict magnet school or endowed academy shall comply with the requirements of sections 1 and 2 of this 2007 Act upon expiration of the contract or on September 1, 2009, whichever is first.

To: Senator Norman Sakamoto and Senator David Ige
Re: SB 2136
Date: Wednesday, February 6, 2008
Time: 1:15 p.m. Rm 225

LATE

Senators Sakamoto and Ige, members of the committees, my name is Carol Gabbard and I urge you to vote in favor of SB 2136.

There is compelling evidence for the need of more fruits, vegetables and whole grains in our diets as well as for the need in lowering our saturated fat intake. As obesity rates and the incidence of type 2 diabetes continue to rise in our youth, we need to take some immediate action and this bill is a big step in the right direction.

I'll give you a quick example of how a vegetable based diet can affect a person's health. Mike and I used to own the Natural Deli where people enjoyed vegetarian fare with dishes made from whole grains, fresh vegetables, and were low in fat. One family who was here from Texas on a 6 week contract ate in our Deli every evening. Before they left to return to Texas, the father asked if I would package and freeze the items on our menu and send them to Texas. The reason, he told me, besides the food tasting great, was he lost weight and lowered his cholesterol during his stay in Hawaii eating out every night! He couldn't believe it.

We need to give our children healthy *choices* in our school lunch program as well as providing something that a small yet significant minority of vegetarian children can eat.

This bill will be fairly easy to implement because there is already a model to follow here in Hawaii. John Cadman, the cafeteria manager at Haiku Elementary School on Maui, has been providing students there with vegetarian options for more than 10 years. All his recipes meet the FDA standards and can therefore be funded with federal money. He's put together a website called www.thebeanpages.com where you'll find many of his recipes already sized to serve 100. The site also has a guestbook with feedback from students and parents regarding the month he prepared lunches one day a week at King Kekaulike High School. They liked the variety and the taste of the meals.

When I was on the Board of Education, I know that Gene Kaneshiro, the former head of the School Food Services Branch, had begun the process of educating food service managers how to prepare foods in a more healthy way, choosing fresh fruits and vegetables, using more whole grains and less fat. Implementation of this bill would be another step in the right direction.

For all of the above reasons and for the sake of our children, I urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

Thanks for your time.
Carol Gabbard
682-0676

testimony

From: DrRuthHeidrich [ruthheidrich@juno.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 05, 2008 2:42 PM
To: testimony
Subject: SB2136 In Favor

LATE

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please copy this and send to joint meeting of HTH/EDU on Wednesday, February 6, 2008
TIME: 1:15 PM PLACE: Conference Room 225, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street".

RATIONALE FOR SUPPORT: As a 26-year triathlete and vegan, I know firsthand how valuable a vegan diet can be. Also as a daily runner, I see students going to and from school and am often appalled at how unfit and obese so many students are. We need to do something to prevent the onslaught of diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, many types of cancer, and much more in our children.

1. Currently, other legislative proposals (e.g. HB2993 www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/Bills/HB2993.html) are targeting the rising rate of childhood obesity in Hawaii. Numerous peer-reviewed studies show that vegetarians (particularly vegans) have lower BMI (Body Mass Index) than omnivores, and lower risk for most of the diseases resulting in later life from childhood obesity as mentioned above.

2. National surveys have shown that 2%-5% of the US population identify themselves as vegetarian. Translated to Hawaii, that means that 5000-13,000, (www.fedstats.gov/qf/states/15000.html) of our school children would benefit from passage of SB2136.

3. The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Cancer Society, American Dietetic Association, American Heart Association, and National Institutes of Health now recommend that there be greater emphasis in the American diet on fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Thank you,

Ruth E. Heidrich, Ph.D., Ironman Triathlete www.RuthHeidrich.com
1415 Victoria St. #1106
Honolulu, HI 96822
808-536-4006

LATE

Testifier: Mark Fergusson, CEO
Down to Earth All-Vegetarian organic & Natural
To: Committees on Health/Education
Date: February 6, 2008 at 1:15 pm in conference room 225
Re: **SB2136 Relating to School Meals (In Favor)**
Report title: Public School Menu Plans; Optional Vegetarian School
Lunch Meals

Aloha.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to comment on SB2136 which if enacted would require the Department of Health, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Education, and Hawaii School Food Service, to develop nutritionally-sound public school menu plans that give students the option of a vegetarian school lunch meal.

I submit this testimony on behalf of Down to Earth, which is Hawaii's only all-vegetarian retailer of natural and organic foods and products. We have five stores on Oahu and Maui, and we are the largest locally owned and operated natural food store chain in Hawaii. As many of you know, Down to Earth has been a part of the Hawaii Landscape for 30 years. We have been helping our island communities improve their health through natural products and by promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Down to Earth supports SB2136 because it is a sensible move in the fight against obesity, which is a key to achieving overall better health.

Virtually all the major scientific and medical institutions in the world agree that the risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and a host of other diseases is linked to a meat-based diet consisting of highly processed foods laden with fats and artificial ingredients. These institutions further agree that the risk is greatly reduced by adopting a healthy low-fat, high-fiber diet.

At Down to Earth, we believe this result is best achieved by adopting a healthy vegetarian diet consisting of organic produce and natural foods. A position paper from the American Dietetic Association shows that we are not alone in this assessment, as I quote:

"It is the position of the American Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada that appropriately planned vegetarian diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate and provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. ... This position paper reviews the current scientific data related to key nutrients for vegetarians, including protein, iron, zinc, calcium, vitamin D, riboflavin, vitamin B-12, vitamin A, n-3 fatty acids and iodine. A vegetarian, including vegan, diet can meet current recommendations for all of these nutrients [...]. Well-planned vegan and other types of vegetarian diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including during pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood and adolescence. Vegetarian diets offer a number of nutritional benefits, including lower levels of saturated fat, cholesterol, and animal protein as well as higher levels of carbohydrates, fiber, magnesium, potassium, folate, and antioxidants such as vitamins C and E and phytochemicals. Vegetarians have been reported to have lower body mass indices than non-vegetarians, as well as lower rates of death

from ischemic heart disease; vegetarians also show lower blood cholesterol levels; lower blood pressure; and lower rates of hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and prostate and colon cancer.”¹

The most telling part about all this is that a vegetarian diet reduces weight.

Research by the Mayo Clinic has shown that, on average, people who follow a vegetarian diet eat fewer calories and less fat than non-vegetarians. Vegetarians also tend to have lower body weight relative to their height than non-vegetarians.²

To add strength to this argument, I point to a scientific review in the April 2006 edition of *Nutrition Review*, which shows that a vegetarian diet is highly effective for weight loss. The study was conducted by Dr. Susan E. Berkow and Dr. Neal D. Barnard of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM). They found that vegetarian populations tend to be slimmer than meat-eaters, and they experience lower rates of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other life-threatening conditions linked to overweight and obesity. These findings are the result of data collected from 87 studies. The data showed that the weight-loss effect does not depend on exercise or calorie-counting.

Just hear what Dr. Barnard had to say about the findings. He said, and I quote:

“There is evidence that a vegan diet causes an increased calorie burn after meals, meaning plant-based foods are being used more efficiently as fuel for the body, as opposed to being stored as fat.” Insulin sensitivity is increased by a vegan diet, allowing nutrients to more rapidly enter the cells of the body to be converted to heat rather than to fat.”³

In essence, these statements by prominent scientific institutions are saying that a vegetarian diet is healthy and can be a major weapon in the fight against obesity. Therefore, why would we not offer vegetarian options in school meal programs?

As many of you know, Hawaii's childhood obesity rate is growing twice as fast as the national level, which has doubled in the past 20 years. The obesity epidemic is now associated with a steep rise nationally in Type 2 diabetes. It used to be considered an adult disease but, sadly, it's now occurring in 10- and 11-year-olds, resulting in complicated health problems and soaring costs.⁴

Brooke S. Evans, a graduate student of the University of Hawaii could not have said it better, as I quote from his white paper, “Obesity in Hawaii: Health Policy Options”:⁵

“Obesity is a growing public health epidemic affecting the State of Hawaii. The problem impacts a broad spectrum of the population, with ripple effects that can be felt throughout society—within the health care, government, and employment sectors. Currently nothing seems to be halting the spread of obesity, and although prevalence rates are steadily increasing in many of Hawaii's communities, the State [lacks sufficient] public policies to tackle this growing health problem.

The problem of obesity is fast becoming a serious concern in Hawaii. Although the average prevalence for the State is 17.6 percent—a rate lower than many other states—research suggests that for certain populations in Hawaii, obesity rates are some of the highest in the country and reaching epidemic proportions.⁶ Furthermore, the prevalence of obesity has increased among all populations in Hawaii. According to the 2002 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) of ethnic groups represented in Hawaii, Native Hawaiians reported the highest proportions of obesity (37.5 percent), followed by “others” (19.6 percent), and then Caucasian (17 percent). Japanese (8.9 percent) and Filipinos (8.8 percent) had the lowest proportions, but were still affected by the problem.”

What makes this finding relevant to this discussion today is the incidence of obesity among children. Evans goes on to say”

“The number of overweight children in the United States has doubled in the past 30 years, with similar patterns occurring in Hawaii. While not enough research has been done on childhood obesity in the State, data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System reports that approximately one-third of Hawaii's students consider themselves to be overweight, with another 16 percent at risk for becoming overweight.⁷ Moreover, for certain communities in Hawaii, studies show that childhood obesity rates may be twice that of the national average.⁸

Obesity in childhood, particularly adolescence, is a predictor for obesity in adulthood. The age-old myth that children will grow out of their “baby fat” has not proven true in this day and age, with prevalence rates of pediatric obesity rapidly increasing in the State. Childhood obesity is not simply a passing phase, but a condition that follows the child into adulthood.⁹ Overweight children past the age of six have a 50 percent chance of remaining overweight into adulthood.”¹⁰

Given all the health problems associated with obesity, we at Down to Earth are very happy that the State legislature is taking a good look at what can be done to provide vegetarian options in school menus for those who want it.

It's the gift of better health. We owe it to our children and to our children's children for generations to come. Let us show them how much we truly care about their health. Let us set the right example and show them one more way how to”Love Life!” by eating healthy.

Clearly, we're not going to eliminate obesity in children by simply offering vegetarian options at school lunches, but it's another tool to work with and a step in the right direction.

On behalf of all the team members and friends of Down to Earth, and all the children who will benefit through better health, I urge you to support this bill and do everything you can to enact it into law.

Mahalo.

- 1 American Dietetic Association, "Vegetarian Diets," June 2003 (Vol. 103, Issue 6, Pages 748-765): http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/advocacy_933_ENU_HTML.htm
- 2 Mayo Clinic.com, "Vegetarian Diet: will it help me loose weight?": <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/vegetarian-diet/AN01580>
- 3 " Nutrition Review, "New scientific review shows vegetarian diets cause major weight loss," April 1, 2006: http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2006-04/pcfr-nsr033106.php
- 4 Star Bulletin, "State urged to double up on P.E. time in schools," Nov. 25, 2007: <http://starbulletin.com/2007/11/25/news/story03.html>
- 5 Brooke S. Evans, "A White Paper, Obesity in Hawaii: Public Policy Options,": <http://www.publicpolicycenter.hawaii.edu/images/PDF/Obesity%20White%20Paper.pdf>
- 6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2002. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey. Available from: www.cdc.gov/brfss.
- 7 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1999. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Available from: www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm
- 8 Chai, D, Kaluhiokalani, N, Little, J, Zhang, S, Mikami, J, & Ho, K. Childhood overweight problem in a selected school district in Hawaii. American Journal of Human Biology 2003, 15(2), 164-177.
- 9 Kranz, S, Siega-Riz, AM, & Herring, AH. Changes in diet quality of American preschoolers between 1977 and 1998. American Journal of Public Health 2004, 94(9).
- 10 National Center for Education Statistics 2000. Childhood obesity data. Available from: <http://nces.ed.gov/>

LATE**testimony**

From: vegimom@juno.com
Sent: Tuesday, February 05, 2008 7:32 AM
To: testimony
Cc: vegimom@juno.com
Subject: SB 2136 - In Support Of

Attention: Senator David Ige, Chair, Health Committee
 Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair, Education Committee,
 Health/Education Committee Members
 Joint hearing, Confer Rm 225, Wed, 2/6, 1:15 p. m.

Please vote "YES" in support of SB 2136, Urging the State Departments of Health, Agriculture, and Education, and the Hawaii School Food Service to Develop Nutritionally Sound Menu Plans That Will Provide Optional Vegetarian School Lunches.

Ten years ago I & many others worked to facilitate 3 tours of nutritionists & educators over a 3 -year period to work w/ educating Hawaii's governor, superintendent of schools, school administrators & program specialists, cafeteria management, teachers, counselors, parents & students in classrooms, at public & private schools statewide, re health & environmental benefits of a plant-based whole foods diet.

In one tour, the Healthy School Lunch Program, national school lunch expert & nutritionist Jennifer Raymond, M. S. & Cornell nutrition educator & national school lunch expert, Antonia Demas, Ph D, worked with Hawaii cafeteria managers & students in classrooms funded nationally by a large grant from the Washington , D. C. group, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and support from local sponsors.

A major part of that program was a 3 - week pilot project with Haiku Elementary, including hands-on classroom education by Ms. Demas incorporating various academic subjects, about the cultural, scientific, etc. benefits of whole plant foods, & a daily alternative , low-fat, vegan, lunch option prepared in the school cafeteria by Jennifer Raymond & Haiku cafeteria manager & award winning chef, John Cadman. Students learned, hands-on, about healthy foods in the classroom, & then could choose a tasty, healthy, cost-effective lunch option incorporating the newest USDA school guidelines in cafeteria. It was a huge hit with students, parents & staff. They also conducted cooking demonstrations for medical facilities & the public, including a public hands-on food preparation project for children, in Honolulu, which was very well attended.

An earlier tour featured Jennifer Raymond presenting healthy cooking demonstrations for school cafeteria staff on all the main Hawaiian islands, as well as for medical facilities & the public. And in the first of the 3 tours, EarthSave International nutrition/ environmental educators went into public & private school classrooms at primary & secondary levels, statewide, teaching students about the health & environmental benefits of a healthy plant-based diet, & leading workshops for school administrators, staff, parents & the public, in concert with local healthy food chefs & physicians, including for a presentation to an annual state 400+ school food service staff, in-service, training workshop.

A long list of major national & local organizations such as American Cancer Society, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, National Education & Training Program, Hawaiian Electric Company, etc. supported the projects. Major print, television & radio media covered the events statewide. Students, teachers, parents, cafeteria managers & administrators lauded the programs. Whole classrooms wrote about their experiences in letters & drawings, thanking the educators. And several students who were fortunate to experience the nutrition/environmental education later incorporated what they learned into science fair projects which went on to win state level awards & compete nationally.

Some people have been fortunate to follow a vegetarian diet from birth. Many more, having been educated at any point later in life about the benefits, have chosen to adopt a plant-based diet. Ever-increasing research about the health & environmental benefits of such a diet is hard to ignore. Families who already know

2/6/2008

the benefits & eat vegetarian at home, as well as those who are eager to learn, including students at all levels of school who, especially in Hawaii, have major medical problems & ever-increasing obesity starting at ever-younger ages, are all deserving the provision of a daily, low-fat, vegetarian lunch option in schools & accompanying education. At least some of those, & eventually all of them, should be vegan (minus any animal products such as dairy, eggs, animal flesh ingredients) & lunches should be announced as such on the school menu. Our family gave up the dairy products first, & immediately found major health benefits.

Children are the most open to new ideas & experiences, especially if presented with facts made relevant to their own lives & destinies, & incorporate good taste & fun presentations. When I worked with the students & staff of Kapunahala Elementary School, which experimented successfully for several years with a vegan lunch option, & I sometimes ate with them in the cafeteria, even on days they didn't offer the option, I had so many students sharing that they were curious about the healthier home-prepared foods my vegan son & I were eating, & some said they had long been trying to get their parents to let them try new foods, & forego the meat & other animal products at home. I found that both the students & many of their parents were hungry for the knowledge & experience which would transform their lives if only it were widely available to them.

Global warming is finally on everyone's agenda as a vital & immediate concern for every individual & species on the planet. But way back before the subject was given so much public prominence, & my son was doing an exhaustive research project on it for his high school science class, he found a number of renowned researchers who cited animal husbandry, especially factory farming & the destruction of rain forests to grow feed crops for farm animals, as one of the 2 major causes of global warming, along with toxic vehicle & factory emissions. With the looming threat of rising sea levels due to global warming, Hawaii, with its situation as a vulnerable island state, should be at the forefront in preventative education & action.

From time to time there are letters to the editor in our major newspaper dailies, from students begging for healthy vegetarian school lunch options.

Please help Hawaii school children enjoy better health & fitness, & aggressively lead the way for the nation in both health (& protection of the environment). Hawaii's designation as "health state" is a shameful lie, while its innocent keiki are leading the nation in obesity, diabetes & budding cardiovascular disease. They & their families deserve better.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Chung
45-814 Anoi Place
Kaneohe, HI 96744
(808) 224-1610
vegimom@juno.com,