



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 03/30/2017  
**Time:** 03:00 PM  
**Location:** 308  
**Committee:** House Finance

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** SB 0423, SD1, HD1 RELATING TO STUDENT MEALS.

**Purpose of Bill:** Prohibits denying a student a meal for failure to pay within: (1) The first 21 days of the first semester of a school year while the student's application for free or reduced lunch is being processed; or (2) 7 days after the student's meal fund account balance is zero or negative. Authorizes the Department of Education to adopt rules or policies for the collection of funds for negative student meal balances. Requires a report to the legislature. (SB423 HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Department of Education (DOE) supports the intent of the bill but feels it is not necessary.

Each school year, USDA regulations permit students with free or reduced eligibility status to carry over their current status until a new meal application is processed, or up to the first 30 days of the next school year. Households may request that the newly enrolled siblings are extended the same benefit. The DOE processes all meal applications received at the School Food Services Branch, within ten working days. Households are encouraged to apply for free and reduced benefits on-line for faster processing.

The DOE currently provides guidelines for schools to develop their own policy and procedure for negative balance notification and meal denials. However, the DOE will be changing to one policy and procedure for the next school year to meet the new USDA regulation.

The DOE does not track the number of meals or the number of students that have been denied meals due to their zero or negative balance account. Elementary schools make every effort to feed the student by not setting limits to the negative balances, continuing to feed the student and continuing to send out the payment reminder notices.

A student may be denied a meal if the student's parent or guardian has been notified and the negative balance exceeds the school's policy for negative balance. Some of these accounts are referred to the administrator who will try to contact the household and assist with the collection

of the negative account.

There are various reasons for the negative balances. Parents are busy and forget to send the money to the school. Students are busy and forget to take the money to the office. However, there are situations with older students who choose not to deposit the money but decides to have a meal. Some parents may be temporarily in a difficult financial situation and may be late in their payments.

There are various ways of paying for meals; parents and students may pay in person, at the school office or another location at the school. Some schools have a secured drop box where parents may leave their deposit in an envelope.

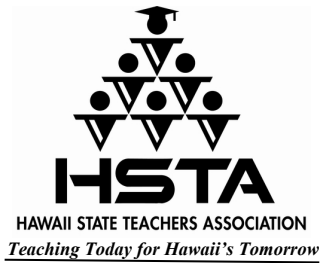
As of January 2017, the DOE began to accept online payments to make payments easier for parents. The School Café website allows parents and students to view the student's account and make payments anytime of the day. The School Café payment application may be accessed by computer, tablets, or smart phones. Parents may choose to receive low balance notification or set up automatic payments. Since January, there has been over 4245 deposit transactions which demonstrates that this new online payment is helpful for many families.

Schools currently choose when and how to notify parents of low or negative balances. Schools may make a personal phone call, or use an automatic telephone messaging system such as robo-call. They also have the option of printing reminder notices from the meal counting system to send home with the students. With the new computerized system, parents may now decide their own low balance threshold and set up the School Café account to send themselves low balance alert messages.

Schools will send out low balances and negative balance reminders as needed. Most elementary and intermediate schools will send out reminders at least once a week. If the school has many accounts that have a large negative balance, the school may send notices more than once a week. The schools are asked to clear the negative balances by the end of the school year. At the end of April 2016, the DOE had a negative account balance of \$64,898 at 199 schools.

In July 2015, the DOE began to participate in the USDA Community Eligible Program (CEP). This program allows the DOE to select schools who meet the criteria and are located in low income area, to provide free breakfast and lunch. In July 2016, more schools were added, and there are now 30 schools on the CEP program. These schools do not collect money and do not have to collect on negative account balances, reducing the statewide negative balances.

The DOE is always looking to improve the procedures to address the meal collection and negative balance problems at the schools, not only for the parents, but also for the schools



1200 Ala Kapuna Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819  
Tel: (808) 833-2711 ♦ Fax: (808) 839-7106 ♦ Web: www.hsta.org

Corey Rosenlee  
President

Justin Hughey  
Vice President

Amy Perruso  
Secretary-Treasurer

Wilbert Holck  
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCE

RE: SB 423, SD 1, HD 1 - RELATING TO STUDENT MEALS

THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2017

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Luke and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SB 423, SD 1, HD 1**, relating to student meals, **with suggested amendments**.

In Hawai'i, food insecurity is one of the most pressing manifestations of overall socioeconomic inequality. Over 70,000 public school students eat free or reduced-price meals in our state, though only 40 percent eat school breakfasts. Hawai'i ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in school breakfast participation rates among qualifying students.

Congress established the National School Lunch Program, in 1946, and School Breakfast Program, fully implemented in 1975, to ensure that low-income students are properly nourished. Yet, many local families struggle to provide nutritious meals for their children. According the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, in Hawai'i, 15.3 percent of families experience food insecurity, meaning that "they do not always know how they will afford their next meal." An additional 3.9 percent are "very low food secure" families that have significantly reduced food consumption because of economic hardship.

At the same time, 47 percent of all public school students qualify for the Department of Education's free and reduced lunch program, a number that has risen by 20 percent since 2007 because of economic decline and cost of living increases. Low-income students are, again, less likely to receive adequate meals at home, leaving them without the calories necessary to perform basic academic tasks. Cases of chronic hunger can lead to achievement gaps, concentration loss, illness, increased absenteeism, behavioral problems, depression, and misdiagnosed learning

disabilities. Thus, providing a decent meal for our impoverished children—or in this case, ensuring that those meals aren't unnecessarily taken away—is a moral and educational imperative.

To make this measure more effective, however, **we suggest an amendment** to proposed subsection §302A-404(b)(2) to read: “Within **two weeks** following a student’s meal fund account reaching a zero or negative balance.” Many parents, particularly from low-income families, are paid on a two-week cycle. Our requested amendment will prevent children whose balance runs out during the beginning of a pay cycle from being denied access to school meals, something that could be particularly important to families facing unexpected financial emergencies.

Hungry students cannot focus. To ensure that our students are well-fed and ready to learn, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.

FIN-Jo

---

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Wednesday, March 29, 2017 4:13 PM  
To: FINTestimony  
Cc: kimcoco@kimcoco.com  
Subject: \*Submitted testimony for SB423 on Mar 30, 2017 15:00PM\*

**LATE**

**SB423**

Submitted on: 3/29/2017

Testimony for FIN on Mar 30, 2017 15:00PM in Conference Room 308

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Kim Coco Iwamoto	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email [webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov)



**LATE**

March 29, 2017

To: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair  
Representative Ty J.K. Cullen, Vice Chair  
Committee on Education

From: Deborah Zysman, Executive Director  
Hawaii Children's Action Network

Re: SB 423 SD 1 HD 1 – Relating to Student Meals  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 308, March 30, 2017, 3:00 PM

---

On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN), we are writing to support SB 423 SD 1 HD 1– Relating to School Meals.

Hawaii has been ranked as the state where people are most likely to live paycheck to paycheck. With this income insecurity, often times families do not have the disposable income to pay for school lunches on schedule. SB 423 SD 1 HD 1 will provide food security for numerous children until the family can qualify for free or reduced-price lunches or be able to deposit money into the child's account.

It is necessary to develop a "charge" program for these instances. Yet, according to the School Nutrition Association's 2016 State of School Nutrition Survey, 76% of school districts reported that their meal program had unpaid student meal debt at the end of the 2014-15 school year. The option some schools districts are choosing is to remove the co-pay for children receiving reduced price lunch or to offer universal free lunches for the entire school, these options provide an increase in enrollment in the program providing additional federal dollars and significant administrative cost savings. The debt taken on by the schools through HB 423 should be monitored and additional revisions to the Department of Education's policies considered in the future.

It is important for Hawaii's students to continue receiving meals:

- Students who come to school hungry cannot focus, and children suffering from food insecurity are unable to grow to their full potential. Undernourished children don't learn as fast or as well as nourished children. Children struggling with hunger are more susceptible to obesity & its health consequences. Children who struggle with hunger are sick more, recover slowly, & are hospitalized more frequently. Teens who regularly face hunger are more likely to be suspended & have difficulty getting along with others. (nokidhungry.com)

- Hawaii Participation in School Meal Program : As the economy faltered, Hawaii saw its numbers of free/reduced-price lunch-qualifying children rise. Children with family incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level receive free meals, and a family with a household income between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level qualifies a student for a reduced-price meal. Today, 47 percent of Hawaii's public school children qualify for free and reduced price lunch, an increase of 20 percent since 2007. ([www.hiappleseed.org/school-meals](http://www.hiappleseed.org/school-meals))

For these reasons, HCAN respectfully requests that the committee pass this bill.

HCAN is committed to building a unified voice advocating for Hawaii's children by improving their safety, health, and education. Last fall, HCAN convened input in person and online from more than 50 organizations and individuals that came forward to support or express interest for a number of issues affecting children and families in our state that resulted in the compilation of 2017 Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda, which can be accessed at <http://www.hawaii-can.org/2017policyagenda>.

**LATE**

Aloha, I am Lindsey, a social work graduate student from UH Manoa, and a supporter of S.B. No. 423. School lunch is essential to a student's success and learning in the school environment. Many children do not eat breakfast or dinner, likely that they come from low income families, meaning lunch is the only meal they get to power them through the day. Not only is school lunch important to a child's success in school, but a nutritious meal or lunch will help a child to grow and develop successfully and healthfully. I support S.B. No. 423, which prohibits denying a student a meal for failure to pay within the first 21 days of the semester while application for reduced lunch is being processed, or 7 days after the student's meal fund account is at zero or negative. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.