

SB-2264-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2020 6:26:20 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/11/2020 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Michael Golojuch Jr	Testifying for LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

Date: February 10, 2020

To: Members of the Committee on Ways & Means

Fr: Pioneering Healthy Communities

RE: Strong Support for SB 2264 SD1-Relating to School Lunch Reform

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran and Members of the Committee,

Pioneering Healthy Communities is a diverse group of community leaders with the shared commitment of promoting a “healthy Hawaii” through networking, identifying and supporting institutional and organizational practices, policy, and systems changes. As such, we stand in **strong support of SB 2264 SD1** which would provide a mechanism to continue providing nutritious meals to students even when their parents fall behind in their school meal accounts.

We believe no child should be denied access to a nutritious school meal due to the inability to pay. A healthy diet, including school meals, is critical to the optimal growth and development of a child and is paramount to achieving success in school. Hungry students have poorer grades and increased emotional and behavioral problems when compared to well-fed students. The passage of SB 2264 SD1 would go a long way to ensure that even those marginalized students, whose family budgets are temporarily drained, can continue to receive the nourishment they need to grow, develop and succeed in school.

We urge the committee to support healthy Hawaii families by passing SB 2264 SD1. Mahalo.

Members of Pioneering Healthy Communities

Paula Adams

Amy Asselbaye

Stacy Evensen

Ray L’Heureux

May Okihiro

Daniela Spoto Kittinger

Diane Tabangay



SENATE BILL 2264, SD 1, RELATING TO SCHOOL LUNCH REFORM

FEBRUARY 11, 2020 · SENATE WAYS AND MEANS
COMMITTEE · CHAIR SEN. DONOVAN DELA CRUZ

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports SB 2264, SD1, relating to school lunch reform, which increases the number of days by which students have to apply for free or reduced lunch and to replenish the student's meal fund, requires the Hawai'i Department of Education to report to the legislature regarding the number of students who are denied meals based on inability to pay, and appropriates funds to the special school lunch fund.

Currently, 47.39 percent of students enrolled in the HIDOE are considered economically disadvantaged, including 3,604 students that experienced homelessness in the 2019-2020 school year. Moreover, 181 schools, including charter schools, are classified as Title I, meaning at least 47.2 percent of each school's total student populations is impoverished. While 84,993 students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs, many students remain on the cusp of poverty and attend schools that do not meet the minimum poverty requirements to qualify the entire school for reduced-price lunch. In turn, these students may be unable to afford the basic nutrition needed to actively participate in the learning process.

Hawai'i has the highest cost of living in the nation. To boost student achievement, we should ensure that our keiki are hungry for knowledge by ensuring that they're never hungry for food.



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting SB 2264, SD1 – Relating to School Lunch Reform
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Tuesday, February 11, 2020, 10:40 AM, conference room 211

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of SB 2264, SD1**. The bill aims to reduce school meal debt and eliminate shaming for public and charter school students who are unable to afford school meals.

No one wants to see a child go hungry, and we all know that a student can’t learn on an empty stomach. Unfortunately, the Hawai‘i Department of Education (DOE) reported that over one hundred students were denied a meal in 2017 due to inability to pay. This figure is likely much higher, as fewer than 30 percent of schools responded to the survey.ⁱ

Mahalo for passing SB 423 in 2017, which was one of the first state-level bills to address this important issue of school meals debt. However, a recent analysis found that of the 14 other states with school meal debt laws, 11 of them are stronger than Hawai‘i’s.ⁱⁱ

In passing that bill, you ensured that no student in our state is denied a school meal solely for failure to pay within the first 21 days of the start of the school year, while the student’s free or reduced-price lunch application is being processed, nor within 7 days after a student’s meal fund account reaches zero or a negative balance.

SB 2264 would extend both grace periods – while free and reduced-price meal applications are being processed at the start of the school year and when school meal fund accounts reach zero or negative balances – to 30 days.

Half of DOE’s students come from families whose incomes are low enough to qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. But in the rush of the beginning of the academic year, it can take several weeks for parents to submit meal applications and schools to process them. In the meantime, the students’ parents may not be able to afford to pay full price for school meals.

Similarly, when a school meal account balance drops to zero or negative, a family might struggle to replenish the account within 7 days, due to the timing of paychecks and unforeseen financial setbacks. That’s why we believe that extending the grace periods will significantly reduce the number of instances when students are denied school meals.

The Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice is committed to a more socially just Hawai‘i, where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve economic security and fulfill their potential. We change systems that perpetuate inequality and injustice through policy development, advocacy, and coalition building.

In addition, this bill eliminates school lunch and breakfast fees for students that qualify for reduced-price meals. This school year, a family of four in Hawai'i qualifies for reduced-price school meals when their annual income falls between \$38,507 and \$54,797.

It is possible that many of these reduced-price eligible students would be eligible for free school meals if they lived in another state. That is because the school meal eligibility guidelines are based on the official federal poverty rate, which does not take into account differences in the cost of living. Since Hawai'i has the highest cost of living among the states, our official poverty rate misses many families.

The Census Bureau has an alternate way to measure poverty that does incorporate the cost of living. According to that measure, Hawai'i has the 13th-highest poverty rate in the nation, as opposed to the 8th-lowest rate, according to the official measure. That difference means an additional 59,000 people in Hawai'i falling into poverty when the cost of living is taken into account.

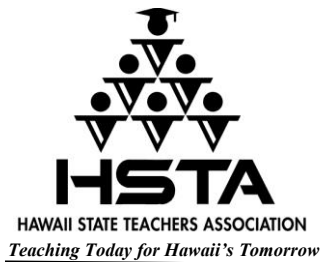
While the school meals eligibility guidelines for Hawai'i are 15 percent higher than in the continental states, that doesn't make up for the fact that our state's poverty rate is 44 percent higher when cost-of-living differences are taken into account. It is likely that many reduced-price eligible families are falling into this gap.

This bill would help alleviate the financial burden of these working-class families by allowing reduced-price eligible students to receive fully free meals, as several states have done. We believe this would be an enormous help for students and families who are teetering at the edge of poverty, but whom don't currently qualify for free school meals, as well as greatly reduce the frequency of children being denied school meals due to inability to pay.

We appreciate your consideration of this testimony. We hope you will pass SB 2264, SD1.

ⁱ State of Hawai'i Department of Education: Annual Report on School Meals, December 27, 2017. Retrieved online January 24, 2020 at http://www.Hawai'ipublicschools.org/Reports/LEG18_SchoolMeals.pdf

ⁱⁱ Honolulu Civil Beat: Why Hawai'i Kids Can Still Be Denied School Lunches, October 9, 2019. Retrieved online January 24, 2020 at <https://www.civilbeat.org/2019/10/why-Hawai'i-kids-can-still-be-denied-school-lunches/>



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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WAY & MEANS

RE: SB 2264, SD1 - RELATING TO SCHOOL LUNCH REFORM

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2020

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SB 2264, SD1**, relating to school lunch reform.

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 47th in school breakfast participation rates among qualifying students. Out of the 14 other states with laws addressing school meals debt, 11 are stronger than Hawai'i's 2017 law, which created a one-week grace period for students after their school meal accounts hit zero or negative balances.

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. In our public schools 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 an educational imperative.

To ensure that our students are well-fed and ready to learn, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



TO: Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO of Parents And Children Together (PACT)

DATE/LOCATION: February 11, 2020; 10:40 a.m., Conference Room 211

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2264 SD 1– RELATING TO SCHOOL LUNCH REFORM

We ask you to support SB 2264 SD1 which increases the number of days by which students have to apply for free or reduced lunch and to replenish the student's meal fund, requires the department of education to report to the legislature regarding the number of students who are denied meals based on the inability to pay and prohibits serving an alternative meal to students who are unable to pay. We support this bill because we believe that regular, healthy, food and nutrition are essential to a child's growth and development and that children should not be penalized because of his/her inability to pay. Ensuring that all children have access to school meals will ensure that children receive can receive up to two healthy meals a day and that they can be optimally prepared to learn while at school.

Schools are places of learning where our children should have every chance to succeed. We agree with the legislature's finding "that proper nutrition is an important part of a student's healthy learning environment. As such, the removal or refusal of a student's lunch due to the inability to pay creates an unhealthy learning environment for the student." A hungry child can't succeed in school. In fact, research shows that students who are hungry suffer poorer grades and increased behavioral and emotional problems, according to the Food Research and Action Center. Eating breakfast at school is associated with better attendance rates, fewer missed school days, and better test scores.

Founded in 1968, Parents And Children Together (PACT) is one of Hawaii's not-for-profit organizations providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, PACT helps families identify, address and successfully resolve challenges through its 18 programs. Among its services are: early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of SB2264**, please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org if you have any questions.



LATE

February 10, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT for SB2264 SD1**

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of SB2264 SD1. Blue Zones Project was brought to Hawaii by HMSA to help increase the overall well-being of our communities and to make Hawaii a healthier, happier place to live, work and play. To accomplish that goal, we address ways that we can lower obesity rates, tobacco use, and chronic diseases.

School meals—both breakfast and lunch—are as critical to student learning as textbooks and tests. In addition to improving student attendance, behavior, and grades, school meals can help to improve youth nutrition and lower rates of obesity. While school administration and teachers work hard to enroll families in the free and reduced price meal program and replenish a student’s meal fund, we know that issues arise that may prevent this from immediately happening. SB2264 takes steps to better support our struggling families and collect important data that can help our school system make informed policy decisions.

No one wants our children to go hungry.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB2264 SD1.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colby Takeda".

Colby Takeda, MBA, MPH
Senior Manager
Blue Zones Project Hawaii



SB-2264-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2020 6:25:16 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/11/2020 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Younghi Overly	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-2264-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/8/2020 6:32:49 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/11/2020 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dara	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Representative Dela Cruz, Chair

Representative Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Committee on Ways and Means

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

Support for S.B. 2264, SD 1, Relating to School Lunch Reform

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Committee,

My name is Dara Goodwin-Downs and I am a student in the MSW program, and a resident of Hilo, HI. I support SB 2264 SD1 which would minimize the situations where students may be denied a school meal because of the student's inability to pay, because I cannot imagine a hungry student behaving, focusing, or learning anything in the classroom. Research has shown time and time again that kids who do not have consistent nutrition have poor cognitive functioning over all.

Additional research by Donna Martin and Sam Kass found that some benefits of feeding students consistent meals include a decrease in anxiety and depression, better behavior, better attendance records, and students show up on time more often. Specifically related to education, students also showed improved math and reading scores when they were fed consistent and dependable meals.

Financially speaking, eliminating the fee for reduced-price school meals will help students and families who are teetering at the edge of poverty but don't currently qualify for free school meals.

SB 2264 would prohibit the denial of a meal to any student due to inability to pay for at least 30 days as well as eliminate the meal fee for students that qualify for reduced-price meals. Imagine the lasting impact this would have on children and their ability to learn, grow, and thrive in school and in our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I urge you to pass SB 2264 SD1, to help ensure that more keiki are able to get the nutrition that they need at school.

SB-2264-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/9/2020 6:58:51 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/11/2020 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Justin Salisbury	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this bill because I was one of the kids who struggled with this problem. I was born to a mother on the WIC program, and my parents struggled to provide nutritious food to my brother, my sister, and me. By the time I was in middle school, my father got a better job, and we started being able to afford real food, including school lunches. My brother might be too young to remember, but my sister and I certainly do. My family's inability to pay consistently for school lunches led us to choose other alternatives that caused other problems; a shame-free lunch program could have made school lunches available to me at a younger age.

I remember, from an early age, when something went wrong with our food, we could not afford to throw it away. The answer was always that my father would eat it. If we burnt the toast, my father would eat it. If something was stale, my father would eat it, and maybe we would, too. If bread was moldy, he could salvage what parts of the bread that he could and eat that so that the best food would go to the rest of us. I had a diet that was very high in sodium, and I don't know exactly what that will do to me as I continue to age. I certainly have a high tolerance for sodium now.

I wasn't put on the reduced-price lunch system, and I don't know if that was because my parents were too prideful or what exactly the reason was. I'm sure I could have qualified. I would bring other things in my lunch box. I don't know exactly where my mother got them, but she found ways to mix and match things to make them tolerable. I remember eating tuna salad out of an ice cream cone from time to time, which wasn't bad. I remember that I had to eat PB&J on hot dog buns or these little white buns with sesame seeds on them—gosh, those were nasty, but it was what we had. I felt nauseated when eating them, and I remember trying to decide, as a kid still young enough to play tee ball, how much of them I needed to eat to not be hungry and stop no later than that point. My father taught me how I could hold my nose while eating in order to not taste my food. I got bullied for what I was eating sometimes, but I didn't have a choice. I remember watching the other kids throw away extra school lunch food and thinking that what they were discarding was better than what I was eating. It's hard to feel like you deserve to benefit from education when you get shamed at lunchtime.

Lunchtime is like a community setting where we all show everyone around us what we've got, and we do judge the people around us based on what they eat for lunch.

When it came to classes after lunch, I remember being tired and wondering how the other kids had so much energy. I didn't think of myself as very athletic or able to shine socially. I didn't think of it as a function of my food then, but I wonder about it now as an adult, especially as our country has begun talking about school lunch program reform. I was able to start eating school lunches after my father got that better job when I was in middle school, but my social status and attitudes about myself had been set. If I could have been able to eat school lunches like the other kids from the beginning, I wonder how my childhood could have been different.

Childhood nutrition impacts our health down the road. I thought I was someone who naturally had digestive trouble as a kid, but I now wonder how much of it was purely a function of poor nutrition. Even as an adult, when I do miss work, it's almost always because I'm having trouble with something digestive. The costs created by school lunch shaming stay with us for life. It's such a small cost while we are young to fix it, but it compounds over the years.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

SB-2264-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/9/2020 7:32:02 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/11/2020 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
C. Kai Lucas	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Shaming already vulnerable children in no way supports their academic or life prospects.

SB-2264-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2020 9:35:24 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/11/2020 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Megan Fox	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

LATE

SB-2264-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2020 9:21:51 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/11/2020 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Amy Brinker	Individual	Support	No

Comments: