



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

Date: 03/11/2020

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309

Committee: House Lower & Higher
Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 2264, SD2 RELATING TO SCHOOL LUNCH REFORM.

Purpose of Bill: Increases the number of days by which students must apply for free or reduced lunch and replenish the student's meal fund. Prohibits serving an alternative meal to students solely for failure to pay within thirty days of the first semester of a school year or thirty days after the student's meal fund account reaches a zero or negative balance. Prohibits a school from publicly identifying or stigmatizing a student who is unable to pay for a school meal. Requires the Department of Education to use moneys from the special school lunch fund to provide school meals. Appropriates funds into and out of the special school lunch 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. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) supports SB 2264, SD2. The Department encourages parents and guardians not only to submit new annual free or reduced-priced meal applications at the beginning of each school, but to also resubmit an application at any point during the school year should their financial conditions change. Further, the Department has an electronic system that allows parents to manage their child's account, make online payments, and receive low balance reminders via email.

The Department appreciates the legislature's efforts to create avenues that ensure all students are able to have the proper nutrition, promoting a healthy learning environment. This measure is a good step in accomplishing that goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for SB 2264, SD2.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is committed to delivering on our promises to

students, providing an equitable, excellent, and innovative learning environment in every school to engage and elevate our communities. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting SB 2264, SD2 – Relating to School Lunch Reform
House Committee on Lower & Higher Education
Wednesday, March 11, 2020, 2:00 PM, conference room 309

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chairs Hashem and Quinlan, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of SB 2264, SD2**. 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

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.

setbacks. That's why we believe that extending the grace periods will significantly reduce the number of instances when students are denied school meals.

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 this bill.

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/>

Date: March 11, 2020

To: Members of the House Committee on Lower and Higher Education

Fr: Pioneering Healthy Communities

RE: Strong Support for SB 2264 SD2-Relating to School Lunch Reform

Aloha Chair Woodson 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 SD2** 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 SD2. Mahalo.

Members of Pioneering Healthy Communities

Paula Adams

Amy Asselbaye

Stacy Evensen

Ray L’Heureux

May Okihiro

Daniela Spoto Kittinger

Diane Tabangay



March 10, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT for SB2264 SD2**

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Hashem, and Members of the House Committee on Lower & Higher Education:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of SB2264 SD2. 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 SD2 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 SD2.

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

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





SENATE BILL 2264, SD 2, RELATING TO SCHOOL LUNCH REFORM

MARCH 11, 2020 · HOUSE LOWER AND HIGHER
EDUCATION COMMITTEE · CHAIR REP. JUSTIN H.
WOODSON

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports SB 2264, SD2, relating to school lunch reform, which increases the number of days by which students must apply for free or reduced lunch and replenish the student's meal fund; prohibits serving an alternative meal to students solely for failure to pay within thirty days of the first semester of a school year or thirty days after the student's meal fund account reaches a zero or negative balance; prohibits a school from publicly identifying or stigmatizing a student who is unable to pay for a school meal; requires the Department of Education to use moneys from the special school lunch fund to provide school meals; appropriates funds into and out of the special school lunch fund; and 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.

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.

SB-2264-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2020 2:49:04 PM

Testimony for LHE on 3/11/2020 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
cheryl B.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support all lunch reform that will help our students.

SB-2264-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2020 8:12:47 AM

Testimony for LHE on 3/11/2020 2:00:00 PM

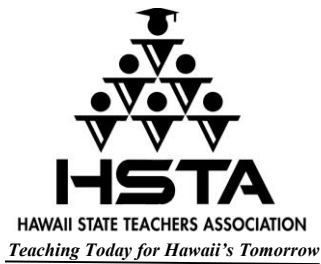
Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
James McCay	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chairs Hashem and Quinlan, and members of the Committee,

In strong support SB 2264 SD2 as Hawai'i's students are the future. We can find money needed within DOE to help fund this program as needed (energy efficiency holds much potential three and private-public partnerships).

Mahalo for your service!
Malama Pono,
James McCay in Honolulu



Corey Rosenlee
President

Osa Tui, Jr.
Vice President

Logan Okita
Secretary-Treasurer

Wilbert Holck
Executive Director



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
LOWER & HIGHER EDUCATION

RE: SB 2264, SD2 - RELATING TO SCHOOL LUNCH REFORM

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2020

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SB 2264, SD2**, 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.



**Parents And
Children Together**
BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT MATTER MOST



TO: Chair Dela Woodson, Vice Chairs Hashem and Quinlan, and Members of the House Committee on Lower and Higher Education

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

DATE/LOCATION: March 11, 2020; 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 309

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2264 SD 2- RELATING TO SCHOOL LUNCH REFORM

We ask you to support SB 2264 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.