

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI  
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 02/09/2023

**Time:** 02:30 PM

**Location:** 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** House Education

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB 0540 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, requires the department of education to provide free lunch to all enrolled students. Appropriates funds.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 0540, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the Department's Hawaii State Board of Education approved budget.

The school meal program operates in each of the Department's non-charter schools and offers meals to its students in elementary through high school. The Department has observed higher than normal negative balances across the state for the 2022 – 2023 school year. As of December 2022, the balance is approximately \$100,000 statewide.

The Department understands the importance of child nutrition and its role in improving overall student health and agrees that children should have adequate meals provided to them, including lunch.

The Department supports serving one school lunch to any requesting student at no cost each school day in every school where the students are required to eat meals at school if the Department receives funding to subsidize what is not received through Federal claim reimbursements.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.





**STATE OF HAWAII**  
STATE COUNCIL  
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543  
February 9, 2023

The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
House Committee on Education  
The Thirty-Second Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Woodson and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB540 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB540**, which, beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, requires the department of education to provide free lunch to all enrolled students. Appropriates funds.

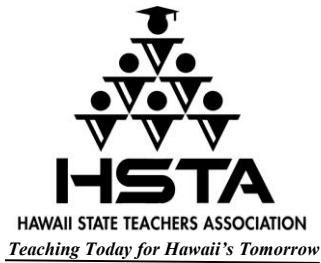
Members of the Intellectual/Developmental Disability (I/DD) community are disproportionately lower income, and any programs designed to relieve financial pressure from families will also benefit our community. Families with parents or children who have I/DD but do not qualify for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch can still have their financial need met through this program.

All children who attend schools under the Hawai'i Department of Education deserve to have access to healthy and filling lunches. SB154 will ensure that all families who need aid, including I/DD community members, will be able to make sure their children get the food they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of HB540**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus  
Executive Administrator



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

Osa Tui, Jr.  
President  
Logan Okita.  
Vice President  
Lisa Morrison  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Ann Mahi  
Executive Director

## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 540 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2023

OSA TUI, JR., PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports HB 540**, relating to education. This bill, beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, requires the department of education to provide free lunch to all enrolled students. Appropriates funds.

Student success demands a nourished body and mind. Too often, our children come to school hungry or without access to quality medical care, leaving them lurching through the school day, rather than learning instructional content.

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.

As noted in the bill, the Department of Education estimates that as many as 15,000 students each year are considered "gap" and come from gap families who do not qualify for the National School Lunch Program, but struggle with food insecurity nonetheless. **This bill seeks to help provide free lunches to all enrolled students, thus will prevent any child from not being able to eat lunch, or being stigmatized for not having enough funds on their account to pay for lunch as well.**

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 is a moral and educational imperative.

For the sake of our students' wellness, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



## HIPHI Board

Misty Pacheco, DrPH  
*Chair*  
*University of Hawai'i at Hilo*

JoAnn Tsark, MPH  
*Secretary*  
*John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native Hawaiian Research Office*

Debbie Erskine  
*Treasurer*  
*ARCH-MEPS Consulting LLC, Owner*

Keshia Adolpho, LCSW  
*Na'au Healing Center*

Camonia Graham - Tutt, PhD  
*University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu*

Carissa Holley, MEd  
*Hale Makua Health Services*

Dina Shek, JD  
*Medical-Legal Partnership*  
*For Children in Hawai'i*

Garret Sugai  
*HMSA*

Kathleen Roche, MS, RN, CENP  
*Kaiser Permanente*

May Okihiro, MD, MS  
*John A. Burns School of Medicine,*  
*Department of Pediatrics*

Titiimaeta Ta'ase, JD  
*State of Hawai'i, Deputy Public Defender*

## HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a  
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community Health  
Worker Initiative

COVID-19 Response

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Hui

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective

Date: February 9, 2023

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Jeanné Kapela, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Education

Re: Strong Support for HB540, Relating to Education

Hrg: Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 2:30 PM, Conf Rm 309

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The Obesity Prevention Task Force (OPTF), a program of Hawai'i Public Health Institute<sup>i</sup> (HIPHI), is in **strong support of HB 540**, which would provide free school meals for all students.

### Everyone Deserves Access to an Education and Food

Access to free public education is not given only to those who can least afford it. All students, regardless of income, are given the opportunity to attend school. The same should be true of the food served at school. Food is an absolute necessity for families and students regardless of income.

Discriminating against those whose income is just above the threshold or who have not successfully filled out the paperwork creates many adverse outcomes. Students are hungry, families miss or cannot afford lunch payments, or they must budget away from other areas of their life. Hawai'i needs to support all students, regardless of income, in receiving free meals.

### Current Subsidies Are Not Enough

Families with incomes above 133% of the federal poverty line require support but are not getting it.<sup>ii</sup> Families of 4 earning just \$42,000 per year are not eligible for free school meals but earn less than half of what is needed to be self-sufficient.<sup>iii</sup> These ALICE families do not qualify for free lunches despite having significant needs. 1 in 3 Hawai'i households are part of the ALICE population who need increased support.<sup>iv</sup> The arbitrary cut-off at 133% of the federal poverty line hurts children and does not accurately reflect the needs of our local families.

Ending the benefits cliff is necessary to stop penalizing families earning slightly more than the maximum benefits threshold. A family with two children loses thousands of dollars in benefits simply because their income is slightly more than the allowable amount.

### **Creating a Culture for All**

The stigma that exists for students and families who participate in the free and reduced lunch program is real and can lead to increased bullying, among other negative outcomes. It is not something that should exist. Judgment should not be placed upon parents or their children due to their financial situation.

In addition, running out of lunch money happens far too often to many families. The angst that is felt by a student whose balance is low is not something that any child should experience. Freeing all of our families from the burden of maintaining a lunch fund is a benefit to all of Hawai'i. This program will support all students to feel welcomed. Students cannot be ready to learn unless their basic needs are met. Ensuring that all children are being fed helps to meet those needs.

Please pass this bill to create a Hawai'i where all students have access to school meals.

Mahalo,



Nate Hix  
Food Access Policy and Advocacy Coordinator  
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

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<sup>i</sup> Created by the legislature in 2012, the Obesity Prevention Task Force comprises over 60 statewide organizations and makes recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and healthcare environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents. The Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI) convenes the Task Force and supports and promotes policy efforts to create a healthy Hawai'i.

Hawai'i Public Health Institute is a hub for building healthy communities, providing issue-based advocacy, education, and technical assistance through partnerships with government, academia, foundations, business, and community-based organizations.

<sup>ii</sup>

<https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/FreeReducedLunch.aspx>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/annuals/2021/2021-read-self-sufficiency.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20220504.114330/>



*Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.*

To: House Committee on Education  
Re: **HB 540 - Relating to Education**  
Hawai'i State Capitol and via videoconference  
February 9, 2023, 2:30 PM

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB 540, relating to the education**. This bill requires the department of education to provide free lunch to all enrolled students beginning in the 2023-24 school year.

Currently, students qualify for free lunch in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) if their families earn up to 130% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and for reduced-price lunch if their income is between 130% and 185% of the FPL.

Especially with the FPL underestimating the true extent of poverty in Hawaii,<sup>1</sup> many families that pay the full price for school meals can't make ends meet. For example, a family of four that makes \$60,000 per year doesn't qualify for free or reduced-price lunch,<sup>2</sup> while the "bare-minimum costs of basic necessities" for that same family is more than \$100,000, according to *ALICE in Hawai'i*.<sup>3</sup> If that family has two students eating breakfast and lunch at school, they must pay about \$1,300 per year for those meals.

The case for universal free school meals is strong.<sup>4</sup> Schools benefit from reduced administrative burdens because they no longer need to collect school meal applications or meal payments. Students see better academic performance and nutrition. Currently 92 DOE schools and 14 charter schools already provide universal free breakfast and lunch,<sup>5</sup> as did all schools earlier in the pandemic, thanks to federal COVID funding.

We estimate that it would cost about \$17.7 million per year to provide free lunch to all students, if there's not increase in participation. That's based on the free, reduced-price and paid student participation in school meals in Hawai'i during the 2018-19 school year<sup>6</sup> and the current school meal prices.

However, for an additional \$1.5 million, **Hawai'i schools could also provide universal free breakfast, and the schools would see significant administrative savings because they would no longer need to process school meal applications or collect meal fees.**

Mahalo the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo, Director of Research and Economic Policy

<sup>1</sup> <https://hiappleseed.org/blog/official-poverty-data-obscures-reality-in-hawaii>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/FreeReducedLunch.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.auw.org/sites/default/files/pictures/ALICE%20in%20Hawaii%20-%202022%20Facts%20and%20Figures%20Full%20Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20220504.114330/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/CEP.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/SchoolMealsReport2022.pdf>



# HAWAII APPLESEED

## CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice  
Support for H.B. 540 – Relating to Education  
House Committee on Education  
Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 2:30PM

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Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support (with comments) of **H.B. 540**, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education (HIDOE) to cover the costs of school lunches for all students.

Adequate nutrition is essential for children’s health, learning, and long-term development. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home.<sup>1</sup> This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day.

Federal eligibility for free meals require that households earn below 130% of the federal poverty level (\$44,850 annually for a family of four in 2023). However, Hawai‘i’s costs of living require that a family with two adults and two school age children make between \$70,000 and \$80,000 to survive.<sup>2</sup>

The federal government covered the full cost of all school meals during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing much needed relief for families that were struggling in an unstable economy. In prior years, school meal debt would still occasionally reach as high as \$60,000 - \$70,000 by the end of the year. However, once meal fees returned post-pandemic, the Hawai‘i Department of Education (HIDOE) saw a rise in school meal debt unlike they had ever seen before, reaching over \$90,000 by November of 2022.

While we support the intent of this bill, we would like to encourage the committee to consider the following amendments to ensure that the policy has the greatest impact:

1. **Include school breakfast in addition to school lunch.** Our calculations (see attached one page brief) show that including a free breakfast each day in addition to lunch would only be about 8 percent of the overall cost of a universal free meal program for the state. In addition, having a nutritious breakfast has been shown to be critically important to children’s success in the classroom.<sup>3</sup>
2. **Appropriate program funds to Hawai‘i Child Nutrition Programs (HCNP) office.** In section 3 of the bill, the funds are appropriated to the HIDOE. Although HCNP is currently housed within HIDOE, it is a separate agency that oversees all federal child nutrition programs in the state. This will ensure that the program is accessible to charter and other independent schools in addition to public schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Feeding America estimates of Food Insecurity among the Child (<18 years) Population in Hawai‘i (2020)

<sup>2</sup> Aloha United Way. Hawai‘i Household Budgets for each county (2018)

<sup>3</sup> Food Research and Action Center. Research Brief: Breakfast for Learning. Retrieved online at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/breakfastforlearning-1.pdf>



- 3. Consider making the program permanent.** California, Colorado, and Maine have created permanent state-funded universal free meals programs, eliminating the need for the legislature to revisit this issue year after year.

Thank you for considering these comments and suggested amendments in your deliberation of H.B. 540. As shown in the attached one page brief, six states have already passed policies to fund universal free meals for students, and 22 others (Hawai'i included) are deliberating policies this year. We are pleased that the Hawai'i legislature is paying attention to this important issue at a time when it is clearly gaining momentum across the nation. Thank you for your consideration of this bill.





# House Committee on Education

February 9, 2023 - 2:30 p.m.

## Testimony Re: H.B. 540: Relating to Education

**Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and Members of the House Committee on Education,**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 540:

Universal Free School Lunches, which would require the Department of Education to provide free lunch to all enrolled students beginning in the 2023-2024 school year.

Ensuring all students have equal access to nutritious meals is one of the best ways to promote their educational and emotional development, reduce behavioral problems in the classroom, and increase positive academic outcomes in our schools. The National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program are the two largest child nutrition programs in the United States. A [recent study](#) found that U.S. children receive their healthiest meals at school, demonstrating that school meals are one of the government's most powerful tools for delivering good nutrition to children.

Offering universal free school meals is a lifeline to Hawai'i's struggling families that make more than the income eligibility limit, but not enough to afford school meal prices. Federal eligibility requirements dictate that only students from households earning below 130% of the federal poverty level (\$44,850 annually for a family of four in 2023) are eligible for free school meals in Hawai'i. Yet, a household *survival* budget for a family of four is \$90,828.

33 percent of households across our state known as asset-limited, income constrained, employed (ALICE), are caught in this chasm between making too much to qualify for meaningful assistance, but not enough to survive and feed themselves nutritious food.

Aloha Harvest

County of Hawai'i

Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development

Hawai'i Appleseed

Hawai'i Children's Action Network

Hawai'i Food Bank

Hawai'i Good Food Alliance

Hawai'i Public Health Institute

Kōkua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center

Lanakila Pacific

Malama Kaua'i

Maui Food Bank

Parents and Children Together

The Hawai'i Food Basket

Supersistence

Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center



Aloha Harvest

County of Hawai'i

Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based  
Economic Development

Hawai'i Appleseed

Hawai'i Children's Action Network

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Center

Lanakila Pacific

Malama Kaua'i

Maui Food Bank

Parents and Children Together

The Hawai'i Food Basket

Supersistence

Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health  
Center

This leaves our keiki vulnerable to missed meals, lunch shaming, and an ever-growing amount of school meal debt—as much as \$90,000 in the first four months of the 2022-2023 school year alone.

Unfortunately, Hawai'i is also one of only a few states with laws that allow students to be denied food when their parent(s) fail to pay school meal debt.

We support the intent of H.B. 540 and propose a few amendments to ensure that the impact and reach of the bill is as significant as intended:

1. Amend section 1(b) to read: Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, the department shall serve one school **breakfast** and lunch to any requested student **attending a public or charter school** at no cost to the student each school day.

a. Making both meals free would also streamline administrative processes for the department.

b. Clarifying language will ensure that charter school students are not overlooked for participation in the program.

2. Amend section 1(e) to include language that ensures that federal funds are leveraged as efficiently as possible to lessen the cost of universal free school meals to the state. For example: *"It is the intent of this section that the state and participating schools maximize the use of all available federal funds, federal programs and federal provisions in carrying out this program."*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**The Hawai'i Hunger Action Network is composed of advocates statewide dedicated to connecting communities and taking action to ensure all people in Hawai'i have enough food to live healthy, dignified, productive lives.**



To: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Representative Lisa Marten, Vice-Chair  
House Committee on Education

From: Paula Arcena, Government Affairs  
Mike Nguyen, Government Affairs

Hearing: Thursday, February 9, 2023

RE: **HB540 Relating to Education**

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AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB540**. This measure requires the Department of Education to provide lunch, free of charge, to all enrolled students beginning school year 2023-2024.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 80,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately half of our membership are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality health care for all. We believe that health is about supporting whole-person care.

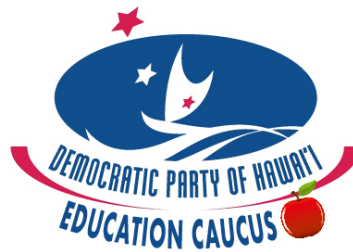
Since the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity has grown exponentially negatively impacting our local families. With 1 in 6 keiki facing hunger<sup>i</sup> we need to invest in long-term solutions to support our most vulnerable populations. Providing free lunch to Hawai'i's students is a step in the right direction.

Proper nutrition is vital for keiki growth and development and reduces the risk of various health conditions. This measure would ensure every student has access to a healthy meal that they may otherwise be denied due to inability to pay or their household's income being even slightly over the income requirements to participate in the free or reduced lunch program. Providing lunch for all students, regardless of household income, would create a sense of equality among students.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of HB540**.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hawaii>



## HOUSE BILL 540, RELATING TO EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 9, 2023 · HOUSE EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE · CHAIR REP. JUSTIN H. WOODSON

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 540, relating to education, which, beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free lunch to all enrolled students.

Hungry children can't learn.

A recent study released by the National Bureau of Economic Research focused on the federal National School Lunch Program's Community Eligibility Provision, which allows schools where many students qualified for free or reduced-price meals to provide a free meal to all students. The study examined whether the provision of schoolwide free meals through the Community Eligibility Provision impacted school suspension rates and **estimated that the chances of being suspended multiple times fell in both elementary school and in middle school.**

Moreover, a 2021 study by the Brookings Institute found that schoolwide free meals improve math performance. This is further bolstered by research conducted by the Food Research and Action Center, which has noted that **students who participate in school breakfast programs have improved attendance, behavior, academic performance, and achievement.** Studies have

clearly demonstrated the link between school meals and student success, which is especially important as schools and educators continue to strategize how to combat the loss of opportunity to learn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, providing free school meals will improve overall health outcomes, both now and in the future. Thirty million students rely on schools to provide them with breakfast and lunch every day in the United States. Those who participate in the school meal program consume breakfasts and lunches of higher nutritional quality than nonparticipants and are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables. **Participation in the school breakfast program is associated with lower body mass index (BMI), lower probability of being overweight, and a lower likelihood of obesity.**

More Americans are sick than they are healthy: half of adults have diabetes or prediabetes; more than half of adults have cardiovascular disease; and 3 in 4 adults are overweight or obese. Healthcare costs account for 29 percent of state budgets and 28 percent of the federal budget. As the National Education Association has stated, through universal free school meals programs, “We can grow generations of healthy eaters and save our country billions.”

Notably, school meals cost less per student when more students participate in a free meal program. An article entitled in *Nutrients* entitled “Universal Free Meals Associated with Lower Meal Costs While Maintaining Nutritional Quality” found that **schools that participated in a universal meal program spent 67 and 58 cents less per lunch and breakfast**, respectively, while maintaining the same nutritional quality. Cost savings are especially important as many schools may face continuing budget cuts.

Nutrition is essential to academic success. This bill will ensure that Hawai'i's keiki are healthy and ready to reach their full potential.

**Kris Coffield · Chairperson, DPH Education Caucus · (808) 679-7454 · [kriscoffield@gmail.com](mailto:kriscoffield@gmail.com)**

**HB-540**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 2:36:41 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Patrick Karjala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing today to list my SUPPORT for HB540.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. Access to food is one of the easiest problems our state can solve for students in K-12.

Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please pass this bill in support of offering no-cost meals to K-12 students.



**HB-540**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 2:52:12 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
cheryl B.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT

100% SUPPORT this bill!

As a retired educator with over 40 years in elementary schools, it is wayyyyy past time that we are feeding all of our children .

SUPPORT

**HB-540**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 5:15:29 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan Pcola_Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is a must do!

**HB-540**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 8:37:12 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sarah Kern	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**February 1, 2023**

**Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and Members of the Committee,**

**My name is Sarah Kern and I am a resident of Lihue, Kauai and a teacher at Chiefess Kamakahahei Middle School. I am testifying in strong support of HB540 to provide free lunch to all enrolled students beginning in the 2023-24 school year. Students should not have to worry about whether they have money in their lunch accounts each day. Teachers, administrators, and other school staff should not have to spend our own money providing meals for students when they don't have funds in their accounts. All students should have access to healthy meals at school every day so that they can have the nourishment they need to focus on their academic and personal growth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.**

**Mahalo nui loa,**

**Sarah Kern**

**HB-540**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 11:54:43 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Brittney Hedlund	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Legislators MATAYOSHI, AMATO, GANADEN, GARRETT, HASHIMOTO, HOLT, HUSSEY-BURDICK, KAPELA, KILA, KITAGAWA, LOWEN, MARTEN, MORIKAWA, NISHIMOTO, PERRUSO, POEPOE, TAKENOUCI, TAM, TARNAS, TODD, WOODSON, Aiu, and Cochran,

I am writing in support of HB540 proposing to fund at least one free school meal a day to all students regardless of their eligibilty for free/reduced lunch status. At the very minimum, students should never be denied access to meals for their inability to pay their student lunch loan. I have seen this happen at my own school where I work and it is incredibky demeaning to see student reactions on their lunch loans and being told they cannot eat if they do not pay. I would be happy to submit [evidence of the school's procedure](#) restricting students from accruing more than \$5.00 on their loan. That is ridiculous! If they had more than \$5.00 to pay I hardly think that they would choose to eat at school. Not to mention how many students return to my classroom hungry and asking me for food. We need to make our systems work for us rather than allowing our kids to feel ashamed for their inability to control outside factors that dictate their meals in school.

Thank you,

**HB-540**

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 7:29:50 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Hunter Heavilin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Providing a nutritious meal to students is crucial in ensuring that they have the energy and focus they need to succeed in the classroom. With many families struggling to make ends meet, this legislation would go a long way in alleviating the financial burden that comes with feeding their children.

Moreover, this bill aligns with our state goals to support the well-being of our state's farmers and communities. By providing free lunch to all students, we are creating an opportunity for local farmers to sell their products, thereby supporting our local food systems and boosting our state's economy. I strongly urge the legislature to pass HB540 and provide our children with the nutritious food they need to succeed.