

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: 02/28/2023

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: CR 211 & Videoconference

Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 0154, SD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Department of Education to develop and implement a School Meal Subsidy Program to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program, subject to income eligibility. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 154, SD1, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the Hawaii State Board of Education approved budget.

The Department's School Food Services Branch operates the school meal program, which serves the Department's non-charter schools. It uses the income eligibility participation requirements established by the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Department supports the development and implementation of a school meal subsidy program provided that the Department receives additional funding to subsidize the price of the meal for those students who currently qualify for reduced-price or paid meals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning
2759 South King Street
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

February 24, 2023

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

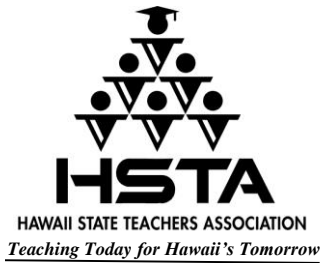
SUBJECT: Measure: S.B. No. 154 S.D. 1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION
Hearing Date: Tuesday, February 28, 2023
Time: 10:00 am
Location: Conference Room 211

EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support

EOEL supports the intention of S.B. No. 154 S.D. 1 and defers to the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE).

Nutritious meals are integral to children's growth, development, and learning and in many cases, school meals may be the only way children have access to healthy, nutritious meals. EOEL is committed to supporting young children's growth, development, and learning and is committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders, including the HIDOE, to expand these opportunities for young children across the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



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

Osa Tui, Jr.
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Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

RE: SB 154 SD1- RELATING TO EDUCATION

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2023

OSA TUI, JR., PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SB 154 SD1**, relating to education. The bill requires the Department of Education to develop and implement a School Meal Subsidy Program to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program, subject to income eligibility and appropriate 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 47th 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 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 those gap students by providing a financial subsidy to help cover the cost of school lunches.

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.



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 28, 2023

The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Dela Cruz and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: SB154 SD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS SB154 SD1**, which requires the Department of Education to develop and implement a School Meal Subsidy Program to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program, subject to income eligibility. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

Malnutrition in children can cause a developmental delay and may worsen or cause a developmental disability. Members of the Intellectual/Developmental Disability (I/DD) community are disproportionately lower income, and any programs designed to relive 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.

Children who attend schools under the Hawai'i Department of Education deserve 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 SB154 SD1**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daintry Bartoldus".

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



HIPHI Board

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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 24, 2023

To: Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Re: Strong Support for SB 154 SD1, Relating to Education

Hrg: Tuesday, February 28, 2023, at 10:00 AM, Conf Rm 211

The Obesity Prevention Task Force (OPTF), a program of Hawai'i Public Health Instituteⁱ (HIPHI), is in **strong support of SB 154 SD1**, which would provide school meal subsidies for those students and families who do not qualify for free school meals.

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.ⁱⁱ 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.ⁱⁱⁱ 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.^{iv} 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

ⁱ 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.

ⁱⁱ

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

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

^{iv} <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20220504.114330/>

SB-154-SD-1

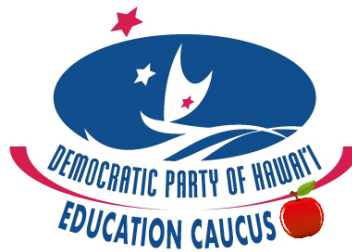
Submitted on: 2/25/2023 11:15:57 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Fox	Testifying for Malama Kaua'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Up to fifteen thousand children each year do not qualify for the National School Lunch Program, often times resulting in a school day without lunch. We should never allow children in our care go hungry.



SENATE BILL 154, SD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 28, 2023 · SENATE WAYS AND MEANS
COMMITTEE · CHAIR SEN. DONOVAN DELA CRUZ

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** SB 154, SD1, relating to education, which requires the Department of Education to implement a School Meal Subsidy Program to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program.

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



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: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Re: SB 154, SD1 - Relating to Education
Hawai'i State Capitol and via videoconference
February 28, 2023, 10:00 AM

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of SB 154, SD1**. This bill requires the Department of Education to develop and implement a School Meal Subsidy Program to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program, subject to income eligibility.

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.

HCAN Speaks! Board of Directors

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President

Nick Kacprowski, J.D.
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Jasmine Slovak
Erica Yamauchi

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,¹ while the "bare-minimum costs of basic necessities" for that same family is more than \$100,000.² 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.³ Schools benefit from reduced administrative burdens because they no longer need to collect meal payments. Students see better academic performance and nutrition. Currently 92 DOE schools and 14 charter schools already provide universal free meals,⁴ and during the pandemic all schools provided free meals, thanks to federal COVID funding.

If this program were to provide **free breakfast and lunch to all students**, and there was no increase in meal participation, we estimate it would cost about **\$19.2 million per year**. If it were to provide **free breakfast and lunch to only reduced-price students**, we estimate it would cost about **\$790,000 per year**. We based our calculations on the free, reduced-price and paid student participation in school meals in Hawai'i during the 2018-19 school year⁵ and the current school meal prices.

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

Thank you,
Nicole Woo, Director of Research and Economic Policy

1 <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/FreeReducedLunch.aspx>
2 <https://www.auw.org/sites/default/files/pictures/ALICE%20in%20Hawaii%20-%202022%20Facts%20and%20Figures%20Full%20Report.pdf>
3 <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20220504.114330/>
4 <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/CEP.aspx>
5 <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/SchoolMealsReport2022.pdf>



Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports: SB154 SD1

Tuesday, February 28, 2023 10 a.m. Conference Room 211

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

HAPA supports SB154 SD1 which requires the Department of Education to develop and implement a School Meal Subsidy Program to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program, subject to income eligibility.

The department of education estimates that up to fifteen thousand children each year do not qualify for the National School Lunch Program, oftentimes resulting in a school day without lunch. This bill requires the DOE to develop and implement a School Meal Subsidy Program to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program.

Feeding the next generation should be a top priority of all of us and supporting families that are food insecure is critical to shaping the future.

Please support SB154 SD1.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director

LATE

Committee on Ways and Means

Tuesday February 28, 2023 – 10:00a.m.

RE: S.B. 154: Relating to Education

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** of S.B. 154: School Meal Subsidy Pilot Program.

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.

We know keiki and their families in Hawai'i would benefit tremendously from equal access to school meals. For children specifically, Hawai'i had the second highest-food insecurity rate in the nation in 2021, at about 25%. 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. This leaves our keiki vulnerable to missed meals, lunch shaming, and an ever-growing amount of school meal debt—as much as \$90,000 for 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.

Conservative estimates done by local advocacy organizations place the cost of universal free school meals (i.e. eliminating the cost for free and reduced priced breakfast and lunch for families) at \$20.6M annually.

We support the intent of S.B 154 and propose a few amendments to ensure that the impact and reach of the bill is as significant as intended:

- 1) Amend section 2(b) to read: "The school meal subsidy program shall target children whose families are not otherwise eligible for free breakfast and lunch under the free and reduced price breakfast and lunch programs administered by..." Breakfast is an essential meal and provides the strong start needed for keiki to learn in the classroom. To streamline the administration of the subsidy program and increase**



Aloha Harvest
City and County of Honolulu -
Office of
Climate Change, Sustainability,
and
Resiliency
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

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.

food access, we encourage the inclusion of breakfast in the subsidy program.

- 2) **Amend section 2(b) to read:** *The school meal subsidy program shall target children whose families are not otherwise eligible for free lunch under the free and reduced price lunch program administered by the department of education's ~~school food services branch~~ Hawaii Child Nutrition Program and that meet the income eligibility participation requirements...* **Administration by HCNP would allow both DOE public school students and public charter school students to have access to free school meals.**
- 3) **Add section 2(d) to read:** *The Department shall maximize access to and receipt of federal funds and any other opportunities for non-state funds with the intent to draw down the maximum amount of federal funds for the cost of operating school meal programs; and conduct an annual analysis for eligibility under the federal Community Eligibility Provision. This would reduce the cost to the state for the subsidy pilot and ensure the maximum amount of federal funds are being requested by the State.*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 154.



Testimony of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for SB 154 – Relating to Education
House Committee on Education
Thursday, February 28, 2023, at 10:00AM

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support (with comments) of **SB 154**, which would establish a school meal subsidy program for Hawai'i students who are not eligible for free meals through the National School Lunch program.

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.¹ 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 or reduced price 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.²

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. Make all students eligible.** Two other proposals being considered by this committee would eliminate meal co-pays for all students, and other states around the country are moving forward with similar proposals.
- 2. Maximize federal reimbursements.** The committee may wish to include language that requires schools and the state to take advantage of federal provisions that would maximize the possible federal reimbursements. This could include directly certifying students who are on Medicaid, and maximizing the number of schools that utilize the Community Eligibility Provision.
- 3. 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

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

² Aloha United Way. Hawai'i Household Budgets for each county (2018)

classroom.³

4. **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.
5. **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 SB 154. 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.

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

Healthy School Meals for All

Universal Free School Meals: Cost Estimates for the State of Hawai'i

Universal free school meals allow all enrolled children in a school that operates the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program to receive free breakfast and lunch, regardless of their family's income.

Six states have already passed policies to offer free meals, and many others are prepared to follow suit. The Hawai'i legislature is currently considering the following bills that would do the same: [S.B. 154](#) and [H.B. 540](#).

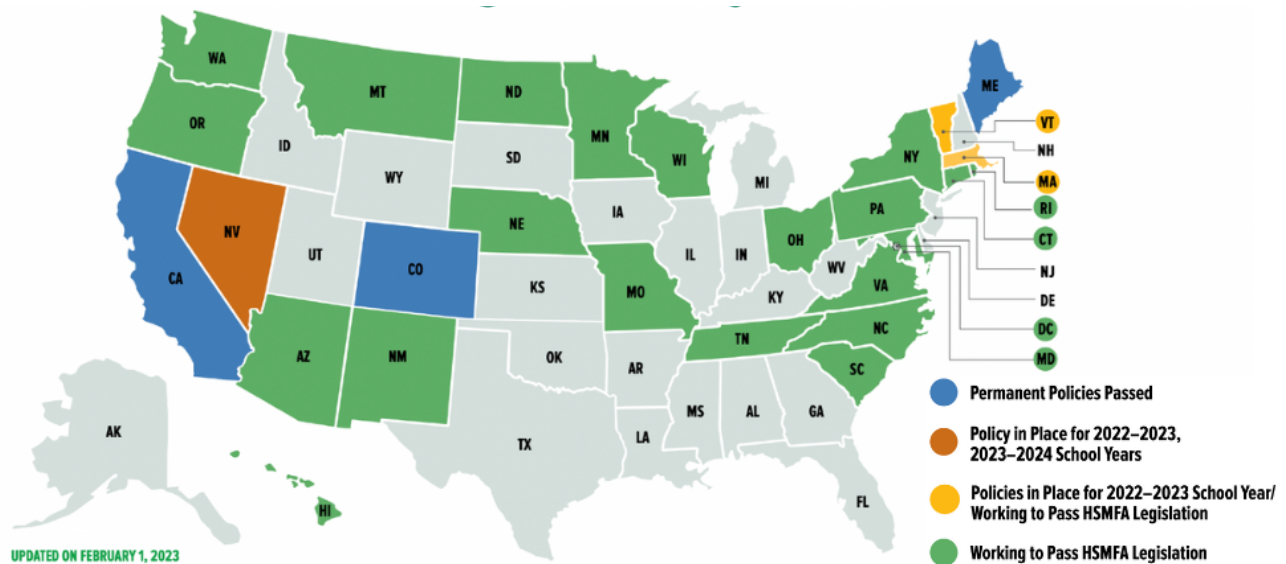


Image courtesy of the [Food Research & Action Center](#)

Estimated State Costs⁴

	Pre-pandemic participation rates ⁵	Projected participation rates ⁶
Breakfast only	\$1,504,764.00	\$1,686,840.44
Lunch only	\$17,750,687.40	\$18,957,734.14
Breakfast & lunch	\$19,255,451.40	\$20,644,574.59

⁴ Lost revenue from co-pays only. Does not take into account any changes in administrative costs.

⁵ Assumes SY 2018-19 average daily participation rates and SY2020-21 eligibility data for reduced price and paid students for all public and charter schools.

⁶ Assumes a 6.8% increase for lunch and 12.1% increase for breakfast over SY18-19 average daily participation rates for reduced price, and paid students (USDA estimates).

To: Michelle N Kidani
Donna Mercado Kim
Senate Committee on Education

Measure: S.B NO. 154 – Relating to Education

Date: Tuesday, February 28, 2023

Time: 10:00 am

Location: Conference Room 211

IN SUPPORT of SB154

Hello Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jaron Yamauchi and I am currently an MSW student at the University of Hawaii, studying to work with children and families and a high school basketball coach for Kalani. I am writing this testimony **IN SUPPORT of S.B. 154.**

Food nutrition is something that is heavily relied upon in the growing and developmental stages of the human body. Proper nutrition can be the difference between an attentive mind as compared to an unconcentrated or tired mind due to a lack of energy. The cost of living in Hawaii ranks second in the United States and yet a family that is below the average median income line cannot qualify for free lunches.

In both of my professions, I often work with a lot of youth in the public education space, and a lot of them do not have the access to lunch daily. Because of this, students that I coach are often burning more calories than they are taking in which causes a lot of injuries and strains on their bodies. In the social work space, students have stated to me that it is difficult for them to

focus when they are hungry and that due to a lack of funds, they are not allowed to eat lunch every day. With students that do not qualify currently for free lunches, they are being put at a disadvantage to obtain a proper education due to the lack of support needed to help a growing developing mind and body. As a coach and social worker I do not want to see youth's education compromised due to something that youth do not have full control over. Helping them have access to daily food will have the potential to help them focus more on school and to have healthier lifestyle habits.

Youth do not get a choice in where they are placed in the socioeconomic status of society. The ability to provide proper care for kids can lead to better education and healthier lifestyles and that is what bill S.B. 154 can do. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

Jaron Yamauchi

jaronky@hawaii.edu

SB-154-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2023 11:07:45 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sunny Savage	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support!

SB-154-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2023 9:10:45 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Rhoden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dea Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Senate Committe on Ways and Means:

Please accept this testimony in strong support of SB 154 providing school meal subsidies for students whose families don't qualify for free/reduced school meals.

Hawaii is one of the only states in the nation that stigmatizes children who do not have lunch money in their account and refuses them a school meal. This is a heartbreaking yet completely fixable situation that should be the simplest thing to get behind. We should not accept refusing to feed hungry kids, especially at school which for some is the one place they expect to be safe and have their needs met.

Kids should not be paying the price by going hungry, whether their parents or guardians can't afford to pay, forget to put money on the account (it happens, especially when working multiple jobs), or otherwise are not stepping up. Refusing to feed kids does nothing to correct the situation and only harms children, by keeping them hungry, stigmatizing them, and setting them up to feel that no one cares. It just perpetuates the cycle.

If the state can find money to keep paying to attract tourists, or pay consultants to design an entertainment district, it can find money to ensure every single hungry kid at school can be fed, which should be a much higher priority than more visitors or a new stadium complex. My son attends public school and lunch (not subsidized) costs about \$2.50 a day. That's less than \$15 a week per child. We can and should do better, so I urge you to please pass SB154 and correct this shameful situation.

Respectfully,

Lisa Rhoden

Hanapepe, Kauai

LATE

SB-154-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2023 10:08:56 AM
Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hunter Heavilin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SB154 aims to establish a School Meal Subsidy Program to provide school lunch subsidies to children from low-income families who do not qualify for free lunch under the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program. Proper nutrition is crucial for children's growth and development, and ensuring access to healthy meals is an essential part of supporting their overall well-being. Unfortunately, many families struggle to afford nutritious food, which can have a significant impact on children's academic and physical performance.

This bill recognizes the importance of child nutrition and seeks to address the issue by appropriating funds and establishing a program to provide school lunch subsidies to children who would otherwise go without. By doing so, it will help to ensure that students have access to healthy meals that can support their learning and overall health. This is a crucial step towards supporting our children and ensuring that they have the resources they need to succeed in school and beyond.