

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:** 02/08/2023

**Time:** 03:00 PM

**Location:** CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** Senate Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** SB 0154 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.

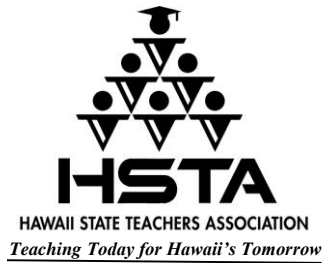
**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 154, 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.



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Osa Tui, Jr.  
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Executive Director

## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SB 154 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2023

OSA TUI, JR., PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SB 154**, 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 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 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**  
**Executive Office on Early Learning**  
2759 South King Street  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

February 7, 2023

**TO:** Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Education

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

**SUBJECT:** **Measure:** S.B. No. 154 – RELATING TO EDUCATION  
**Hearing Date:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023  
**Time:** 3:00 pm  
**Location:** Conference Room 229

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support Intent**

EOEL supports the intention of S.B. No. 154 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.



**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 8, 2023

The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senate Committee on Education  
The Thirty-Second Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Kidani and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: SB154 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS SB154**, 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.

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.

Children attending 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**.

Sincerely,

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

Daintry Bartoldus  
Executive Administrator



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 Education  
Re: SB 154 - Relating to Education  
Hawai'i State Capitol and via videoconference  
February 8, 2023, 3:00 PM

Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of SB 154, relating to the education**. 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.

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 meals,<sup>5</sup> and during the pandemic all schools provided free meals, thanks to federal COVID funding.

We estimate that if this bill were to provide free breakfasts and lunches to all students, and there was no increase in meal participation, it would cost about \$31.4 million per year. 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.

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

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

HCAN Speaks! Board of Directors

Liza Ryan Gill  
President

Nick Kacprowski, J.D.  
Treasurer

Mandy Fernandes  
Secretary

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

<sup>2</sup>

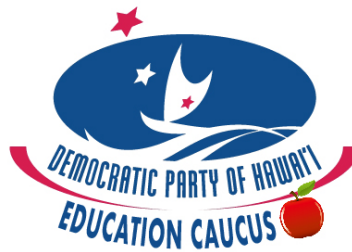
<https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/FreeReducedLunch.aspx>

<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>



## **SENATE BILL 154, RELATING TO EDUCATION**

FEBRUARY 8, 2023 · SENATE EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE · CHAIR SEN. MICHELLE N. KIDANI

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** SB 154, 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, subject to income eligibility.

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)**



# Senate Committee on Education

February 8, 2023 - 3:00 p.m.

## Testimony Re: S.B. 154 - School Meal Subsidy Program

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

Parents and Children Together

The Hawai'i Food Basket

Supersistence

Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health  
Center

**Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee,**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB154: 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.





Aloha Harvest

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Center

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— more than \$90,000 worth for the first half of the 2022-2023 school year alone. Hawai'i is also one of only a few states with laws that allow students to be denied food when their parents fail to pay school lunch bills.

The Hawai'i Department of Education, along with thousands of other school districts across the nation, successfully implemented universal free school meals during the COVID-19 pandemic. In making a program like this permanent in Hawai'i, we would join Colorado, California, Maine, Nevada, Massachusetts, and Vermont in ensuring no child goes hungry at school. With our current strong fiscal outlook, it's an investment we can and should make. Please advance this measure to 1) to provide meals to all school children, 2) to make those meals no-cost to all families, and 3) ensure that we maximize the amount of federal funds (and other private and public dollars) we receive to offset the financial cost to our state.

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

**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.**

**SB-154**

Submitted on: 2/3/2023 7:37:48 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/8/2023 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

**COMMENTS**

ALL students should receive free meals at school. This is something that with Federal and State funds should be easily accomplished. This bill should not be needed. ALL students should be fed, always.

**SB-154**

Submitted on: 2/4/2023 8:48:25 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/8/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Walker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

loha mai kakou e Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michael Walker, I live in the ahupua‘a of Mokuleia on the island of O‘ahu and I am writing **in strong support of SB1454**, which will establish the therapeutic psilocybin working group.

Researchers around the world have renewed scientific understanding of the benefits of psychedelic medicine on the brain and body, so it is with growing certainty that scientists and medical professionals are now working with policymakers to bring plant-based medicines like psilocybin above ground for therapeutic uses.

Major research and academic institutions around the world have shown psilocybin to be a promising and even groundbreaking clinical treatment for a wide range of mental and psychiatric diagnoses including anxiety, addiction, depression, end-of-life anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Psilocybin is increasingly considered one of the most natural, effective, non-addictive, and safe treatment options for depression and anxiety. These impressive results have led the U.S. Food & Drug Administration to grant psilocybin a Breakthrough Therapy designation twice for treatment-resistant depression.

Citing this research, initiatives in favor of therapeutic psilocybin are occurring nationwide, including Oregon’s new therapeutic psilocybin program, which just launched in 2023, along with Colorado recently decriminalizing and partially legalizing psilocybin, in addition to counties across the nation decriminalizing psilocybin and other similar psychedelics.

With mental health becoming a more pressing issue in our communities, we all know someone who stands to benefit from access to therapeutic psilocybin. Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Michael Walker