



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

Date: 02/08/2024

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1775 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools. Appropriates funds.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) provides comments on HB 1775.

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 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.

The Department would request an amendment that the appropriation in the measure be directed to the Department's School Food Services Branch (SFSB) which manages the school food program operations and the state funding for the Department's non-charter schools.

The cost to fund this legislation is at minimum, \$32,685,203.77 at the current meal participation rates, but ranges due to several variables we cannot account for at this time. These variables include meal participation and labor increases, as well as food and supply cost increases. For example, currently, lunch participation is approximately 50%. If that were to increase to 75%, the fiscal need would be at minimum \$150,209,612.49. Current calculations have also included additional costs to fund the Afterschool Snack Program that, although not indicated in this legislation, the SFSB

participates in and receives federal reimbursement for.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **HB1775 - Relating to education**
Position: **Support**
Hearing: **February 8, 2024, 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 309**
Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** HB1775 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools.

One of the things teachers tell their students in advance of testing days is to be sure to have a good breakfast. When students are hungry, it affects their performance in school. As grocery prices for families continue to rise, food insecurity rises as well. Too often, students who want to eat are denied a meal by no fault of their own as they find themselves in circumstances that they never wanted to be in. Ensuring that all students who go to their school cafeterias can receive a breakfast and lunch is important to allow them to keep their thoughts on their studies and not on hunger.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 5:26:53 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cynthia M Archibald	North Shore Nutrition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a Nutritionist, I have extensively researched and written on the topic of childhood diet/nutrition, and specifically the correlation with cognitive function. The evidence shows that regular access to healthy and nutrient dense food improves children's' cognitive performance. Making these meals free for every student eases a significant financial and psychological burden on the families, improving the quality of life for the students' and creating a more conducive better learning environment. This bill supports the overall goals/purpose of our public education system and is an investment in Hawaii's future. I strongly support the bill.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Education
Thursday, February 8, 2024; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 1775 – RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** House Bill No. 1775, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

The bill, as received by your Committee, would:

- (1) Require free school breakfast and lunch to every student enrolled in a public school, regardless of a student's eligibility for participation in the federal school breakfast or lunch program; and
- (2) Appropriate an unspecified amount of general funds for fiscal year 2024-2025 to provide for universal free school breakfasts and lunches after federal funding is accounted.

For many of Hawaii's families, the only consistent source of food for our children has been the meals provided at the public schools. Hawaii's underprivileged and rural communities are extremely vulnerable to changing economic conditions. With inflation on the rise, entire families are struggling to put food on the table on a consistent basis. All one needs to do is visit various food distribution events and see the large number of people who wait to receive surplus food.

For this reason, the HPCA supports this bill and urges your favorable consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.

To: House Committee on Education
Re: **HB 1775 – Relating to Education**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 8, 2024, 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB 1775**. This bill, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools and appropriates funds.

Hawai'i public schools provide students with access to meals through federal school meal programs, such as the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. 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.

Many families that have to pay 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**. 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 for 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>



HIPHI Board

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HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &
Evaluation

Community Health
Worker Initiatives

COVID-19 Response

Environmental Health

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/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce
Development

Date: February 7, 2024

To: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Education

Re: HB 1775 Relating to Education

Hrg: Thursday, February 8, 2024 at 2:00 PM

Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Instituteⁱ appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **Strong Support of HB1775**, which would provide students at DOE public schools with free school meals.

Access to education and food.

All students, regardless of income, are given the opportunity to attend school. Everyone has access to free public education, it is not just provided to those who can least afford it. 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 because families miss or cannot afford lunch payments, or a family must budget away from other areas of like housing or healthcare to pay for lunch. 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 \$45,000 per year are not eligible for free school meals but earn less than half of the \$104,000 that is needed to make ends meet.ⁱⁱⁱ These Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (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.

Proven success.

The Hawai'i Department of Education successfully ran a free school meals program for two full calendar years. Students received free school meals for both the 2020-2021 school year and the 2021-2022 school year. The only difference between then and now who is financially responsible for payments. Hawai'i would take the place of the federal government.

In 2018-2019, there were 32,352 breakfasts and 100,234 lunches served daily in Hawai'i by schools participating in the national school lunch program.^v That is compared to the 2021-2022 school year where there were a total of 27,721 breakfasts and 92,687 lunches served daily where lunches were free.^{vi} There was not an increase in meal participation as meals became free, instead there was a shift in which students were participating. Based on that information, we don't anticipate there will be a need for the DOE to hire additional staff or to purchase additional equipment to implement this program.

Students go without food because of a variety of circumstances, and they need to be fed in order to learn. Nutrition helps overall health, and eating allows students to concentrate on school, not on their hungry stomachs. This concept is so well supported that eight states and New York City Schools all provide free meals.^{vii} Every child should know that when in school, they will eat.

Thank you for considering this important bill, and our testimony in strong support of HB1775. Please pass this measure.

Sincerely,



Nate Hix
Social Impact Policy Manager
Hawai'i Public Health Insititute

ⁱ The Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, formerly known as the Obesity Prevention Task Force, was created by the legislature in 2012 and is comprised of over 60 statewide organizations. The HEAL Coalition works to make recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and health care environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents.

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

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://unitedforalice.org/hawaii>

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

^v <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/SchoolMealsReport2022.pdf>

^{vi} <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/school-meals-2023.pdf>

^{vii} <https://apnews.com/article/free-school-meals-0c927f491b2ee9d4ce7e04b44da79e51>



2024 Network Members

City and County of Honolulu
County of Hawai'i
Hawai'i Appleseed
Hawai'i Children's Action
Network
Hawai'i Department of
Agriculture
Hawai'i Food Bank
Hawai'i Good Food Alliance
Hawai'i Public Health Institute
Kōkua Kalihi Valley
Comprehensive Health Center
Lanakila Pacific
Mālama Kaua'i
Maui Nui Food Alliance
Parents and Children Together
Supersistence
The Food Basket Inc., Hawai'i
Island's Food Bank
The Pantry, by Feeding Hawai'i
Together
UH Center for Indigenous
Innovation/ Health Equity
Wai'anae Coast
Comprehensive Health Center

Hawaiihungeraction.org

House Committee on Education

February 8, 2024 at 2:00PM

RE: Support for HB 1775, Relating to Education

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i Hunger Action Network, a coalition of more than twenty local organizations with the mission to advocate for food security for Hawai'i households, appreciates the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of HB 1775**. This bill would require the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all public school students in the state of Hawai'i.

During the pandemic, the federal government took great strides to stem alarming spikes in child hunger by granting free school meals to all children. The waiver authorizing free school meals for all students expired in June 2022, meaning families are again being required to pay for school meals.

Eligibility thresholds for free school meals require that a family of four makes under \$44,850 per year, putting this benefit out of reach for Hawai'i's Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families. That's two out of three struggling families that have to pay for school meals, which can cost up to \$110 per child per month.

More and more children are falling through the cracks, and our network members are seeing and feeling the impacts first-hand. The demand for food assistance across the state continues to overwhelm our emergency food networks on a day to day basis. The number of schools offering school pantries is climbing year over year, and teachers are being forced to use money from their own personal

budgets to stock “snack drawers” for children who show up to school without eating, or who are overdrawn in their school food accounts. They know that their students are hungry, and have no choice but to provide some kind of nourishment if they want them to succeed in school.

The impacts are not isolated to the emergency food system—they are being felt by the state as well. The Hawai‘i DOE has been reporting record meal debt in recent years—more than 2.5 times the rate seen in pre-pandemic times—because many parents simply can’t afford the fees. And sadly, it’s our children who are ultimately paying the price; as little as a \$5 meal debt can result in a child being denied a meal at school, putting them at risk of going hungry and making it harder to learn.

Passing this bill would be an investment that would have an enormous impact. Our network members estimate the cost of this program at around \$25 million a year—about one percent of the DOE’s annual budget.¹ It would also put Hawai‘i at the forefront of a national movement to make sure no child goes hungry. So far, eight states have passed similar legislation, and dozens more are expected to follow suit in coming years.

Providing school breakfast and lunch without charge to ALL public school families—regardless of income—is a crucial strategy to guarantee that every child receives the necessary nutrition for growth and well-being. Mahalo for your consideration of this bill.

¹ [Hawai‘i Appleseed \(2024\). Equity on the Menu: The Case for Universal Free School Meals](#)



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for H.B. 1775 – Relating to Education
House Committee on Education
Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 2:00PM

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **H.B. 1775**, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education to provide up to two nutritious meals to all public school students, regardless of their ability to pay.

School meals are one of the government's most powerful tools for delivering keiki good nutrition
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 eat in a day.

Universal free school meals are a lifeline to Hawai'i's struggling families

Federal eligibility for free or reduced price meals requires that households earn below 130% or 185% of the federal poverty level (\$44,850 or \$63,825, respectively, annually for a family of four in 2024). However, Hawai'i's costs of living require that a family with two adults and two children make at least \$104,000 to simply survive.² This leaves Hawai'i's Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families making slightly above the poverty line ineligible for assistance yet unable to make ends meet.

A universal free school meals programs is efficient and effective

Universal free school meals (UFSM) augments the traditional income-based eligibility system and removes known barriers to participation including economic, administrative, language, and social challenges. UFSM is a proven strategy to reduce childhood food insecurity and improve the overall well-being and academic performance of children. A 2022 study of schools implementing UFSM found an almost 5% decline in households classified as food insecure.³

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **H.B. 1775**. As shown in the attached one pager, eight states have chosen to make this worthwhile investment in their keiki. Across the country, UFSM has been implemented successfully through the intentional blending of policies and funding mechanisms at the federal, state, and local levels. We are pleased that the Hawai'i legislature is paying attention to this important issue because hungry keiki cannot learn. Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

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

² Aloha United Way. ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Hawai'i (2023)

³ Journal of Health Economics. "The Effect of Free School Meals on Household Food Purchases" (2022)

Universal Free School Meals

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

UFSM programs offer up to two free, nutritious meals to all students in a qualifying school, regardless of their ability to pay, and are designed to improve access to and increase participation in school meals programs, especially for students with lower incomes. UFSM augments the traditional income-based eligibility system and removes known barriers to participation including economic, administrative,

language, and social challenges. Program funding mechanisms vary from state to state, with many states utilizing General Fund appropriations or voter-approved tax measures on the wealthy specifically to fund their programs. **The Hawai'i legislature is currently considering the following bills that would fund a UFSM program: [H.B.1540](#), [H.B.1775](#), [S.B.2327](#)**

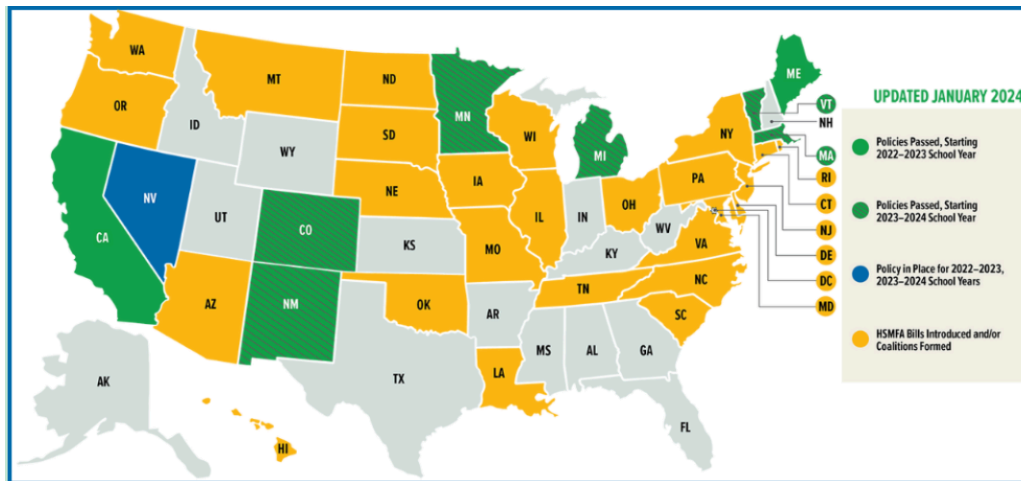


Image courtesy of the [Food Research & Action Center](#).

Eight states have already passed policies to offer free meals, and many others are prepared to follow suit.

Estimated State Costs⁴

	Pre-pandemic participation rates ⁵	Projected participation rates ⁶
Breakfast only	\$1,504,764.00	\$2,066,620.05
Lunch only	\$18,531,117.00	\$23,489,061.93
Breakfast & lunch	\$20,035,881.00	\$25,555,681.97

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 SY2022-23 eligibility data for reduced price and paid students for all participating 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).

<u>States with UFSM</u>	<u>Starting School Year</u>	<u>Funding Mechanism</u>
California	2022-2023	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation
Colorado	2023-2024	Voter-passed tax measure that reduces income tax deductions available to households earning \$300,000 or more
Maine	2022-2023	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation
Massachusetts	2023-2024	Voter-approved 4% tax on incomes over \$1M
Michigan	2023-2024	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation
Minnesota	2023-2024	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation
New Mexico	2023-2024	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation
Vermont	2023-2024	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation via a \$.003 increase in the property tax rate

IATSE LOCAL 665

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Thirty-Second Legislature, State of Hawai'i
Regular Session of 2024
House Committee on Education

Testimony by IATSE 665
February 8th, 2024

H.B. 1775 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the House Committee,

My name is Tuia'ana Scanlan, International Trustee and president of IATSE Local 665, the union representing technicians in the entertainment industry in Hawai'i. **Local 665 strongly supports HB 1775**, relating to education.

A 2022 study by Aloha United Way found that 44% of Hawai'i's households are below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold. 54% of Hawai'i households with children are below this threshold as well. The report "reflects a significant increase in local households who slipped from ALICE into poverty [...] especially affecting Hawaiian and Pacific Islander households, female-led households, and households with children" (https://www.hawaiihealthmatters.org/content/sites/hawaii/ALICE_in_Hawaii_-_2022_Facts_and_Figures_Full_Report.pdf)

A majority of households in the state of Hawai'i with children are barely making ends meet, even though the head(s) of the household is/are employed. HB 1775 will significantly relieve a portion of the economic burden that working families in Hawai'i are struggling to shoulder. The last thing that a child should have to worry about is whether or not they're going to have enough to eat today. HB 1775 will not only increase the quality of life for these children, it will increase both proficiency and growth metrics for these students because a child who no longer needs to focus on survival can repurpose that energy toward thriving.

IATSE 665 humbly asks for your committee's consideration of HB 1775. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

In Solidarity,



Tuia'ana Scanlan
International Trustee
President, IATSE 665 (he/him/his)

To: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Education

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Public Policy Manager

Hearing: Thursday, February 8, 2024, 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 309

RE: **HB1775 Relating to Education**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB1775**. This measure requires the Department of Education to provide breakfast and lunch, free of charge, to all enrolled students beginning school year 2024-2025.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 84,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 40 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

According to the Hawai'i Foodbank, 1 in 4 keiki in Hawai'i may not know where they will get their next meal, and for more than 81,000 keiki, getting the energy they need to learn and grow can be a daily challenge.¹ We need to invest in long-term solutions to support our most vulnerable populations. Providing free breakfast and lunch to students is a step in the right direction.

Proper nutrition is vital for keiki growth and development and may reduce the risk of health conditions like anemia, asthma, hyperactivity and anxiety.² 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 school meal program. Providing breakfast and lunch for all students, regardless of household income, ensures they have a consistent source of nutritious food and can focus on learning, while removing stigma for students accessing free or reduced meals.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of HB1775**.

¹ <https://hawaiifoodbank.org/keiki/>

² <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger>



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

February 7, 2024

Subject: *HB1775 - Relating to Education*

Aloha Chair Justin Woodson, Vice Chair Trish La Chica, and the House Committee of Education,

Mahalo distinguished legislators for taking the time to review this testimony being submitted **IN SUPPORT** of **HB1775** which would require the Department of Education to provide a free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools beginning the 2024-2025 school year.

With many still recovering from the economic impacts of COVID-19 shutdowns and the increase in the price of basic essentials on the rise, the need to ensure our children are well nourished and prepared to be successful is more important than ever. With food and housing insecurity on the rise, 2 of 3 households struggle to make ends meet, we need to ensure that our keiki are given inclusivity and economic justice at our learning institutions to enforce positive outcomes for their feeling of belonging and worth in society. Making sure children get access to educational tools to become community contributors will be enhanced when they are able to congregate with their peers during mealtime without stigma. The current issues with school meal applications such as language barriers, income verification, or fears surrounding personal information disclosures as well as federal poverty threshold limits prevent families in need to obtain meals for their kids.

Hawaii is one of the few states that allow schools to deny food to kids with negative accounts. We must also consider how the keiki who are denied a meal due to their negative balance must feel knowing that already prepared food gets thrown away. It is not only wasteful but adds additional costs for disposal. It would seem that the school system would rather dump perfectly good food than give it to a hungry student. Imagine instead of having distracted, disruptive, and disheartened young minds who could eventually go to stealing food before or after school, we have engaged, encouraged, and excited pupils who feel valued and loved.

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2024, the cohort of interns are undergrads and graduate students from throughout the UH System. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

Which version would be more thankful to be in school, more willing to participate, and likely to remember that their experience was better because we put their well-being first? There are other states that have embraced this and we can join them as leaders in our nation. We can enforce aloha throughout their educational career and give the families the care they deserve.

We urge the committee to pass HB1775. We would like to thank Chair Justin Woodson, Vice Chair Trish La Chica, and the House Committee of Education, for considering the comments herein.

Mahalo,
Janine Mariano & Hawaii Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

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February 6, 2024

To: COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

Re: SUPPORT of HB1775 - Relating to Education

Hrg: February 8, 2024, 2:00 PM

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 450 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. Our mission is to promote public health in Hawai'i through leadership, collaboration, education and advocacy. Additionally, HPHA aims to call attention to issues around social justice and equity in areas that extend beyond the traditional context of health (e.g., education, digital equity, cultural sensitivity), which can have profound impacts on health equity and well-being. Therefore, as stewards of public health, HPHA is also advocating for equity in all policies.

HPHA supports HB 1775 as the bill aims to provide universal free school meals ensure that every child has access to a nutritious and balanced meal while in school, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Currently, 2 out of 3 struggling families are ineligible for free school meals, and the cost of school meals can be a barrier to accessing nutritious meals. Universal free school meals can alleviate the financial burden on families and promote a healthier, more equitable educational environment. This initiative contributes to better physical health and increases students' ability to concentrate, learn, and thrive academically.

HPHA strongly supports HB 1775 and respectfully asks that you pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important public health issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Kessler
Executive Director

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 8:06:34 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marissa Baptista	Hawai'i State PTSA	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

My name is Marissa Baptista and I am writing in strong support of HB1775 to implement universal free school meals in Hawai'i. As a member of the Hawai'i State PTSA and passionate advocate for food access, I believe that providing nutritious meals to all students, regardless of the economic circumstances, is an important step to ensuring the well-being and academic success of all of our keiki.

Universal free school meal programs help reduce food insecurity, promote equity and justice, improve academic success, and eliminate stigma.

The National PTA 2021 Convention Delegates adopted the following [Resolution on Improving School Meal Programs](https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/ptas-positions/Individual-PTA-Resolutions/resolution-on-improving-school-meal-programs/) (https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/ptas-positions/Individual-PTA-Resolutions/resolution-on-improving-school-meal-programs/)

Whereas, Proper nutrition is imperative to the health, development and academic achievement of children, and the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 requires each Local Educational Agency participating in the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Program to have a wellness policy that promotes student well-being and ability to learn; and

Whereas, In 2018 roughly 4.9 billion lunches are served annually to 30.4 million children that participate in the National School Lunch program, with approximately 74% of participants receiving free or reduced-price lunches, and almost half of those students consuming breakfast at school; and

Whereas, Food insecurity, faced by 14 million children, is exacerbated by meal debt policies that shame and stigmatize, is linked to lower reading and math scores, falling behind peers academically and socially, and may lead to increased risk of behavioral issues, such as anxiety, hyperactivity, and aggression; and

Whereas, Guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and US Department of Agriculture indicate that scheduling recess before lunch, and providing at least 20 minutes of seated time to eat a meal, leads to increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, decreased food waste, reduced discipline referrals, and increased academic performance; therefore, be it

Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent associations support legislation and advocate for wellness policies, which include measurable goals and standards regarding child nutrition, that will ensure sufficient time for students to receive and consume a meal, and provide for recess opportunities; and be it further

Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent associations oppose the practice of meal debt policies that shame or humiliate students, or prevent children from receiving a full meal equivalent to their peers; and be it further

Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent associations be engaged in ongoing policy-making decisions to expand equitable access to school meals, including programs that increase meal availability.

A universal free school meals program in Hawai'i is estimated to cost \$25.5M or only 1% of the DOE's operating budget. A small investment with a huge impact.

We urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai'i. By doing so, we have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health, well-being, and future of our keiki and Hawai'i.



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 8, 2024

HB 1775, RELATING TO EDUCATION

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawaii **supports** HB 1775, relating to education. Pursuant to the “Education” section of the Democratic Party of Hawaii platform, the party supports “an excellent, free public education for students at every level.”

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.”

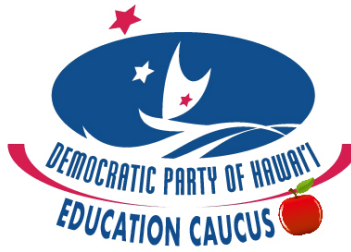
Notably, school meals cost less per student when more students participate in a free meal program. An article entitled in *Nutrients* entitled “Universal Free Meals Associated with Lower Meal Costs While Maintaining Nutritional Quality” found that **schools that participated in a universal meal program 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.

Mahalo nui loa,

Kris Coffield
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 679-7454
kriscoffield@gmail.com

Abby Simmons
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 352-6818
abbyalana808@gmail.com



HOUSE BILL 1775, RELATING TO EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 8, 2024 · EDN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1775, relating to education, which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools.

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.**

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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.**

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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



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

LATE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1775: RELATING TO EDUCATION

TO: House Committees on Education and Transportation
FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: Thursday, 2/8/24; 2:00 PM; Room 309 or Videoconference

Chair Woodson, Chair Todd, Vice Chair La Chica, Vice Chair Kila, and Members, Committees on Education and Transportation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in Support of HB 1775**, which requires the Department of Education (DOE) to provide free breakfast and lunch to public school children, and appropriates funds.. I am Rob Van Tassell with Catholic Charities Hawai'i. **This bill could be life changing for many working families in Hawai'i.**

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy to the most vulnerable of the people in Hawai'i.

Imagine sending your child to school with little or no breakfast because your refrigerator is bare. Providing a free breakfast and lunch enrolled in DOE schools would promote the health and learning abilities of these students. To thrive academically, kids need nutritious meals. Yet, currently, 2 out of 3 struggling families are NOT eligible for free school meals. The cost to purchase these meals is a barrier for many families. This can result in many children not having access to a nutritious meal.

This bill **would help many families in the ALICE population.** They are struggling with Hawaii's great increases in food costs as well as rent and other necessities. In order to keep its workforce, Hawai'i must expand the safety net for food. This bill would provide immediate daily help with food when children need it the most—to learn at school.

Take action now! Help our struggling workforce and give hope for a better and healthier life for their children. Help make sure that every public school child has access to a good nutritious meal at school, no matter what their economic background.

If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson at (808) 527-4813.

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 1775: Universal Free School Meals in Hawai'i

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

Parents for Public Schools of Hawai'i has worked to support public schools, and the teachers, families, and students and families relying on quality, equitable, effective education.

Since 2010 we have worked to ensure that the public knows the quality of our public schools and that our schools are responsive to the needs of our families.

Universal free school meal programs help reduce food insecurity, promote equity and justice, improve academic success, and eliminate stigma. The research shows, and we all know, that students who have nutritious meals are more able to focus on their studies.

Our schools have the capacity to see that all students have breakfast and or lunch each school day, if funded to do so. A universal free school meals program in Hawai'i is estimated to cost \$25.5M or only 1% of the DOE's operating budget. A relatively small investment to ensure health and equity for children in our schools.

We urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai'i and to see that our schools and district receive all the federal support for this important step towards health and equity for our keiki.

Mahalo nui loa for supporting the health of our keiki.

Deborah Bond-Upson
President, Parents for Public Schools of Hawai'i

Oral Testimony for H.B. 1775

Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Aloha. I am E.A. Ho‘oipo Pa Nakea, a dedicated educator at Castle High School, advocating fervently for H.B. 1775—a beacon of hope for universal free school meals in Hawaii.

In the symphony of educational initiatives, this legislation stands out as a crucial crescendo for the well-being and triumph of Hawaii's students. As an educator with a decade of experience, I've witnessed firsthand the profound impact of nourishment on our students.

Our unique Hawaiian landscape, discussed in Cassie Ordonio's illuminating article, reveals the stark reality of students facing meal debt and the challenges of unpaid bills. H.B. 1775 is the key to eradicating this debt, fostering inclusivity, and positively impacting academic performance.

Consider the melody of equalizing access, where every student, regardless of family income, has an equal right to nutritious meals. Hawaii, aligning with a national trend, leads the way with bipartisan support, following the positive examples set by states like California and Maine.

Critics may raise concerns about financial details, charter schools, and program duration. Yet, we acknowledge and commit to collaborative efforts to address these concerns, ensuring transparency and longevity in our vision.

My esteemed co-teacher, Lauren Pokipala, and I will amplify the chorus with impassioned student voices, emphasizing the urgency of this issue. Their stories underscore the importance of prioritizing the well-being of every student in Hawaii.

In closing, as a devoted teacher at Castle High School, I implore the Hawaii Legislature to pass H.B. 1775. This isn't just policy; it's a commitment to securing the well-being and success of every student. Let Hawaii set an example for the nation, prioritizing the needs of its students and creating an environment where every child can flourish.

Mahalo for your time and commitment to the future of Hawaii's students.

Sincerely,

E.A. Ho‘oipo Pa Nakea
Teacher, Castle High School

Aloha Representative [Chair's Last Name] and Vice Chair Representative [Vice Chair's Last Name],

Subject: Written Testimony in Support of H.B. 1775 - Free School Meals Legislation in Hawaii

I am E.A. Ho'oiipo Pa Nakea, an educator with a decade of experience at Castle High School, writing to express my fervent support for H.B. 1775. This proposed legislation marks a pivotal moment for the well-being and success of students throughout Hawai'i.

As illuminated by Cassie Ordonio in a January 30, 2023 article, Hawaii is currently considering multiple proposals to address the gap left by the conclusion of the federal program that provided free meals during the pandemic. With unique challenges in our state, including the allowance of meal denials due to unpaid lunch bills, the proposed legislation stands as a beacon of hope for many families.

Pros and Key Points:

Eliminating School Meal Debt: This legislation has the potential to wipe out looming school meal debt, ensuring no child faces the day hungry due to financial constraints.

Reducing Stigma and Fostering Inclusivity: Universal free school meals dismantle the stigma faced by some low-income students, fostering a more inclusive, supportive school environment. **Positive Impact on Academic Performance:** Research supports the positive correlation between regular meals and academic performance, and this legislation creates an environment conducive to effective learning.

Equalizing Access: The legislation promotes equity by guaranteeing all students, regardless of family income, equal access to meals, creating a more inclusive educational experience.

National Trend and Bipartisan Support: Hawaii aligns with a national trend, considering legislation to make free school meals a permanent part of public education, garnering bipartisan support.

Addressing Unpaid Meal Debt:

The accumulated unpaid meal debt in Hawaii, surpassing \$90,000 in November, emphasizes the urgent need for a comprehensive solution. This legislation ensures students have access to meals without the burden of unpaid bills.

Support from Educational Leadership:

Educational leaders, including Bruce Voss, Chair of the State Board of Education, recognize the value of offering free school meals, portraying it as a positive state investment in the well-being of families and supporting students' learning and focus.

Challenges and Rebuttals:

Concerns About Financial Details: Critics express concerns about the lack of financial details, and we commit to collaborative efforts to provide clear financial plans for the implementation of free universal meals.

Questions About Charter Schools and Program Duration: Addressing concerns about public charter schools and program duration is crucial. By incorporating clear guidelines and regular evaluations, the legislation can refine itself to address these uncertainties.

Cost of Implementation: Critics may worry about the cost of implementation, but this concern should be weighed against the long-term benefits to student health, academic performance, and potential federal assistance or alternative funding sources.

Additional Note:

My co-teacher, Lauren Pokipala, and I will present live and written testimonies from impassioned students, underscoring the urgency and significance of this issue for our student community.

In conclusion, I earnestly urge the Hawaii Legislature to pass H.B. 1775. This transcends policy; it is about securing the well-being and success of every student in Hawaii. By taking this courageous step, Hawaii can serve as an exemplar for the nation, prioritizing the needs of its students and fostering an environment where every child can flourish.

Sincerely,

E.A. Ho‘oipo Pa Nakea, Teacher
Castle High School, 45-386 Kaneohe Bay Drive, Kaneohe, HI 96744
panakealaw@me.com, (808) 308-2654

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:18:20 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keahi Naber	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm Keahi Naber, a junior at Castle High School in the Engineering pathway of the Innovation Academy. I think all public schools should have free lunch and breakfast. I think that because I, my classmates, or other students wouldn't even eat from when we woke up for school between 6 am-7:30 pm until our dinner between 5 pm-9 pm or never the whole day. We don't get to eat anything for more than 12 hours. I do eat the school breakfast and lunch because I qualify for free breakfast and lunch but some days I don't because the food would be hard or cold. But my classmates who don't qualify, some of them don't even get to eat anything more than 12 hours or nothing at all. So I think if school lunch and breakfast were free, they could at least get something in them instead of waiting the whole day or going to sleep with nothing in them. So, please make school lunch and breakfast for free and not just speak for my class but for elementary, intermediate, and high schools because I also have siblings who are in those grade levels and experience the same thing as me.

Mahalo,

Keahi Naber

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:58:09 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Callum Down	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Callum Down and I am a junior at Castle High School in Kaneohe and I sometimes purchase lunch at school, and most of the time bring home lunch. At school there are a lot of people who are not able to afford to purchase lunch at school and there are studies that show that having food at lunch and breakfast correlates to performing better at school by an equivalent of 6 school weeks worth. The lunch issue affects me because the students who don't eat lunch sometimes tend to mope around and if I work in groups with these people my performance could be hindered. Members of the legislature, may I suggest you dedicate a higher percentage of the school budget to the lunch meals and give every student the right to free lunch.

Thank you for your Attention,

Callum Down

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:06:21 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of HB1775. Thank you.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:04:14 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Matson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee members,

Please pass this bill to help keep our keiki fed. Also please continue to support all efforts to provide healthy and locally sourced food! No child should be hungry. Universal free school meals ensure that every child has access to a nutritious and balanced meal while in school, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Currently, 2 out of 3 struggling families are ineligible for free school meals, and the cost of school meals can be a barrier to accessing nutritious meals. Universal free school meals can alleviate the financial burden on families and promote a healthier, more equitable educational environment.

Mahalo,

Shannon Matson

Hawai'i Island Resident

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 3:26:27 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Kidd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure so long as the bill meets the nutritional needs and is appealing to the age groups they are serving. Use locally sourced food when feasible as well.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 4:28:50 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kelly anne olayan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support free lunch to all keiki in DOE schools. Until the quality of lunches can improve, all keiki should eat free. And even when school lunches improve, ALL KEIKI SHOULD STILL EAT FREE! If inmates eat free, KEIKI SHOULD EAT FREE! Not all families can quality for free or reduced lunches forcing some children to go without food all day because they can not afford the lunches. This is happening all over the state, not just on Oahu. My daughter shares her lunches with a friend and even buys her lunch some days when she has no funds in her account just so she doesnt go without food all day and then onto sports on an empty stomach!

KEIKI FIRST

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:18:54 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christine Matsuda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of this measure. Access to reliable nutrition is an essential component of a healthy community, and this is critical for our keiki. By making school meals universally available, we destigmatize free and reduced meals and remove barriers for those children who deserve free and easy access to the healthy, nutritious food they need to learn and grow. As a parent of two DOE elementary school students, this is not a matter of theory, but something that is deeply personal, and very urgent for my kids and thier peers.

Thank you for your conisderation of my testimony,

Christine Matsuda

Nu'uanu 96817

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:26:21 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support HB1775 related to Universal Free School Meals. I am favor of this bill because food is important to health, wellbeing, and learning and there is a community of families that cannot afford to provide nutritious breakfast and lunch for their keiki or pay for the school meals provided. Universal Free School Meals will ensure children have at least two meals during the school week that can improve health outcomes and decrease stress, depression, and chronic diseases. This will also address some disparities that children and families face when finances are not available to meet all their needs. Thank you.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:36:02 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support of HB1775 to implement universal free school meals in Hawai'i. As an advocate for food access, I believe that providing nutritious meals to all students, regardless of the economic circumstances, is an important step to ensuring the well-being and academic success of all of our keiki.

Universal free school meal programs help reduce food insecurity, promote equity and justice, improve academic success, and eliminate stigma.

A universal free school meals program in Hawai'i is estimated to cost \$25.5M or only 1% of the DOE's operating budget. A small investment with a huge impact.

I urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai'i. By doing so, we have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health, well-being, and future of our keiki and Hawai'i.

Date: February 6, 2024

To: The Honorable Justin H. Woodson, Chair
The Honorable Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Education

The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair
The Honorable Darius K. Kila, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Transportation

Re: **Support for HB 1775**, Relating to Education

Hrg: Thursday February 8, 2024 at 2:00 pm via Videoconference Conference Room 309

Aloha House Committees on Education and Transportation,

As a parent, community member and healthcare professional I am writing in **strong support of HB 1775**, which beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools; and, appropriates funds.

In Hawai'i, 2-out-of-3 struggling families are not eligible for free school meals. This bill would ensure that every child can eat for free and our hungry keiki would not be forced to skip meals.

This bill ensures that no child would have the stigma of having to return a meal because of no money in their school food account.

Hungry students cannot focus on learning. All children deserve to eat during the school day, so that they are ready to learn.

In schools elsewhere that have implemented universal free school meals, student test scores rose the equivalent of six (6) additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes.

Hungry students are at much higher risks for stress, depression and chronic disease. Investing in nutritious food for our keiki will result in lifelong benefits to their health.

I **strongly support HB 1775**, respectfully ask you to pass it out of committee.

Many thanks for your consideration,

Forrest Batz, PharmD
Keaau, HI

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:53:14 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cortney Midla	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing to support HB1775. As a public health nurse and parent, I understand the importance of nutrition on health and learning. It is important to reduce stigma for free/reduced price lunch to provide this nutrition. As it is, more than 50% of public schools qualify for this as it is, so we as a community would benefit from extending this to ALL students to improve learning.

Mahalo,

Cortney Midla

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:59:53 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Spencer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chairperson,

Our children are our future. With a lot of mental and physical health issues increasing in our children, nutrition is a vital part of growth and learning. There are many children who go hungry on a daily basis due to a shortage of income making food just out of arms reach. Parents have to identify to pay rent or buy food. Snap benefits can be out of reach for many just by a penny. Thus, leaving children hungry and destitute. So for the following reasons I support this bill:

- No child should go hungry. Good nutritional food is essential to growth and learning. Universal lunches will support this. Each child will have the ability to have at least 2 meals a day at minimum. Many families go hungry on a daily basis having only one meal a day.

- Providing equal access to all children will decrease stigmatizing these children because they don't have money to purchase meals or enough in their account. Nutritious meals will assist with growth and positive neuropathways in their brain. It provides a inclusion and a sense of belonging as each child is afforded the same opportunity for a nutritious meal.

- starting the day off with a meal is essential in providing energy needed to sustain activity throughout the day. It also leads to better health outcomes for our future population. 3 meals a day is vital. Some children only get one. When a child is hungry they are unable to focus, become irritable, get easily frustrated and have difficulty with building and sustaining positive relationships. Investing in our children's nutrition will lead to increased mental stability and flourishing along with decreasing depression, isolation, stress and life long chronic diseases. Leading to better health outcomes.

- It also will assist with increased academic performance. Where universal school lunches have been implemented, there has showing an increase in student performance and viability.

In conclusion, providing basic needs for our children will allow them to flourish in being productive and positive members of society as they grow. Centuries and studies have proven that when a basic need is met, an individual will benefit and succeed into the next step of their life's

journey.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:00:24 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I AM IN FULL SUPPORT of this bill which will beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, require the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools. Appropriates funds.

THIS IS the year for this to pass with no objections! As a retired educator, I can't stress enough the importance of children having food to eat to help them in throughout their day. "There is considerable evidence of the effective role that participation in these programs plays in alleviating food insecurity and poverty, and in providing the nutrients students need for growth, development, learning, and overall health, especially for the nation's most vulnerable children and adolescents" (FRAC)

California, Maine, Colorado, Minnesota, New Mexico, Vermont, Michigan, and Massachusetts have all passed free Healthy School Meals ! Hawai'i should have been the first state to offer this to our communities! Let's go!

Again, I SUPPORT this bill.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:02:41 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Nihipali	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- No Child Should Go Hungry – 2 out of 3 struggling families are not eligible for free school meals. This bill would ensure that anybody can eat for free and our hungry keiki would not be forced to skip meals.
- No child would have the stigma of having to return a meal because of no money in their school food account.
- Hungry students cannot focus on learning. All children deserve to be fed during the school day, so that they are ready to learn.
- Increased Academic Performance – When universal free school meals has been implemented elsewhere, student test scores rose the equivalent of 6 additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes.
- Improved Health Outcomes – Hungry students are at much higher risks for stress, depression and chronic disease. Investing in nutritious food for our keiki will result in lifelong benefits to their health.
- It is ridiculous that a bill must be passed to feed our keiki at school. Hawaii is part of the United States, the richest country in the world. All children should be fed breakfast, lunch and a snack in school.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Michele Nihipali

54-074 A Kam Hwy.

Hauula, HI 96717

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:20:06 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Harald Ebeling	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support of HB1775. It is a tragedy that we need this bill to ensure that our keiki can attend school without either going hungry or resorting to cheap and unhealthy junk food to keep them going. It would be an even greater tragedy though if HB1775 failed to pass.

Education is a basic human right, regardless of socioeconomic background. Can you imagine trying to focus during class without having had breakfast? Everyone ought to be eligible for a nutritious meal, no exceptions.

Please support universal free school meals without discrimination or requirements to demonstrate need. Life is hard enough at the poverty line; no need to make anyone stand to identify themselves as needy.

Mahalo!
Harald Ebeling

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:18:10 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Loren	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- No Child Should Go Hungry – 2 out of 3 impoverished families are not eligible for free school meals. This bill would make sure that anybody can eat for free and that hungry keiki would not be forced to skip meals.
- No child would have the embarrassment of having to return a meal because of no money in their school food account.
- Hungry students cannot focus on learning. All children should be fed during the school day, so that they are ready to learn.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 6:14:51 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeenna Canche	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 7, 2024

Members of the Committee,

Please accept my testimony in support of Senate Bill HB 1775 funding Universal Free School Breakfasts and Lunches for all students. I have been a World Languages educator in the state of Hawaii for 18 years, and I firmly believe that our keiki deserve the right to an equitable education. Providing students with free school breakfasts and lunches helps to level the playing field for students who are economically disadvantaged. Therefore, I ask that this bill be passed as is, because if it does, we will provide our students with one more tool that they need to be ready to learn when they arrive in our classrooms.

Mahalo,

Jeenna Canche

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:11:51 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zaira Cabacongan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a junior at Castle High School. I support this bill because I have friends around me that struggle and still need to purchase lunch just because they get cut off from qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Sometimes they can't purchase lunch because they don't have enough money to put in their account or even pay back to the school. I care about this bill because I know how important it is for people to eat, especially when they are trying to learn. I want the legislatures to pass this bill so kids have one less thing to worry about.

Mahalo,

Zaira Cabacongan

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:44:47 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
RoAnn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support HB 1775, a pivotal proposal for universal free school meals. This initiative tackles the issue of food insecurity among students, ensuring that every child, regardless of their economic circumstances, has access to nutritious meals. By alleviating hunger, we create a more equitable educational environment, allowing students to focus on learning without the added burden of hunger.

Moreover, universal free school meals contribute to enhanced academic performance. The link between proper nutrition and cognitive function is known and by prioritizing the well-being of our students, we directly impact their learning outcomes. This initiative is an investment in the future success of our communities, fostering a generation better equipped for academic achievement.

Beyond the educational realm, HB 1775 promotes a sense of equality among students by eliminating the stigma associated with receiving free meals. This fosters a supportive and cohesive school environment where all students benefit equally. By addressing food insecurity at its roots, this bill not only transforms our schools but also contributes to building a stronger, more resilient society.

I urge you to support HB 1775, recognizing its potential to not only address immediate concerns of food insecurity but also lay the foundation for a brighter, more equitable future for all students.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:47:07 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mericia Palma Elmore	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Universal Free School Breakfasts and Lunches for children.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:54:02 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
tia pearson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please extend free lunches to all students so that there won't be any that go hungry during classes. With the high price of food, many can't afford to eat every day.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 8:13:48 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
May Ratiu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill to provide free school lunches in all public schools. Children should be able to focus on school and not be hungry.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 8:01:45 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
K. H.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a resident of House District 28 and Senate District 13. I Support HB1775.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 8:31:25 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leslie Iijima	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of our schools to have free lunches for kids in need. In Hawaii, the cost of living is so high that parents just can make ends meet. Please support our keiki's in need.

Leslie Iijima

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:40:28 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Maurice Sledge	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Esteemed committee chair and members,

My name is Kevin Sledge and I am an educator here in Hawai'i. I am writing to express my support for HB1775 that would fund free breakfast and lunch for all students in Hawai'i regardless of ability to pay. I know first-hand the negative effect hunger can have on students' performance in class. I have seen students lethargic because of hunger; unable to engage fully in learning for thinking of lunchtime. This being so, I have even seen some of those same students not go get lunch because they don't have funds in their accounts. I have seen students relying on their friends to share with them so that they have something to eat. Students have asked me if I have snacks in my classroom and when I can, I try to ensure that I have snacks available for such students. No student should be forced to cope with hunger while at school for the inability to pay for meals. Furthermore, no student should have to bear the social stigma of not being able to pay or for qualifying for free and reduced lunch as under the current system. None of those things would continue to be a barrier for students if they are all provided breakfast and lunch for free. I believe that it is within the reach of our legislature to make this a reality for our Hawai'i students. I implore you to make it so. Thank you, committee, for this opportunity to submit testimony.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:15:47 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley Galacgac	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass HB1175. Universal free school meals can alleviate the financial burden on families and promote a healthier, more equitable educational environment. This bill can help ensure keiki never go hungry, so they can go to school and be nourished mind, body, and spirit. This will have impacts that will last a lifetime.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 6:34:48 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jayne Datorfreeman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support bill HB1775 . Children don't learn well when they are hungry. Besides providing free lunches and breakfasts, the food quality of the meals needs to be improved.

Thank you

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:00:04 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natasha Woodward	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Working at a school, I see many students not eat lunch. Although they do not say so, I suspect many do not eat because of the cost to their families. If this bill passes, this one barrier will be eliminated so that all students have access to nutritious food.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:13:12 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Layla Holman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Layla Holman and I am a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because it's important that all kids have the chance to eat at school. I have sometimes not been able to purchase lunch because of a negative balance and without food I become more drained and have a hard time focusing in school. School lunch should be funded and free for the students.

Thank you for your attention.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:14:09 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kekoa Tani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Kekoa and I am a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of this bill because if I don't have money in my account, I can't get lunch. Also the lunches are too small and they give out so little. They should give out a bigger portion of food to us since we are in high school. Sometimes the lunches aren't good and I wait till I get home to eat. I care about this bill because if I don't eat a good lunch then how am I supposed to be able to focus in school. Also, I am an athlete and need to fuel my body. Please change the lunch so it's free and give out a bigger portion.

Mahalo,

Kekoa Tani

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:14:20 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaitlyn Champoux	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

I had written a whole essay including studies and citations arguing in favor of free breakfast and lunch to all students within the state. However, as I looked over every claim I realized it all boiled down to this: every child deserves to have access to food no matter what. If we truly want to be a state that claims to care about its youth and upcoming generation, then we need to care about them in all aspects; their education, their health, and their development.

As a teacher, I constantly have to have snacks and food on hand. Many of my students are unable to bring food to school for one reason or another and are in debt with the cafeteria because they can not afford the school lunches or breakfasts. Sometimes, the only food they eat in the school day are the energy bars or peanut butter crackers I am able to provide for them. In no world is this just, especially one in which we have the power to change it.

Please vote to ensure *all* students are fed in both mind *and* body.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:15:18 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zaron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Zaron. I am a senior at Castle High School. I support the bill because I will normally wait till I get home to eat something so the whole time I'm at school I don't eat anything because I would always have yellow slips with a negative balance. This affects me because I would not have enough energy to stay focused in my classes and not get work done. I would like for this bill to be passed because it would help me and a lot of students and families and help us get the energy we need to stay focused in school.

Sincerely,

Zaron Makishima

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:15:28 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malu Preston	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Malu Preston and I'm currently a junior at Castle High School and I support all students having free school lunches. I support this because some parents are going through rough times and can't afford school lunches for their kids. Legislature, put yourself into someone's shoes and try to walk a mile or two and imagine your kid coming home and telling you that he wasn't able to eat since there was no money in his account.

Sincerely,

Malu Preston

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:15:37 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daymien	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm a junior that goes to Castle High School. I am support of this bill because i Believe School lunch should always be free because the School is keeping the kids for a long time and some kids may not be able to afford the school lunches, Hawaii has 6 Schools that give free lunches and there is 40 Schools that charges for their school lunches, The Kids that may not be able to afford school meals and doesn't eat all day will have stress and a hard time to paying attention when trying to learn.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:15:58 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeremy Ooi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a student from Castle High School. And I support HB1775 because everyday I hear people asking for food from others because they don't have that kind of money for school lunch. I get asked a few times and I would always feel bad so I give them something I'm not going to eat whenever I'm not that hungry. Please help all of us be able to eat without paying for expensive food.

Mahalo.

Jeremy Ooi

Greeting: Aloha, To Whom it May Concern

Explain Who You Are: junior at Castle High School

Why do you support the bill: I am in support of HB1775 because.....tell your story of how you can't eat sometimes, will wait to eat at home, your experience with getting the yellow slips with a negative balance, stories about friends who don't/can't eat, etc.

Why you care about the bill: how does lunch affect you (whether you eat or don't eat)

Call to action/last words or thoughts: what do you want the legislature to do

Closing: Sincerely, Thank you for your Attention, Mahalo

Aloha, To Hawaii Public Health Institute

I am Dani, a Junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because I feel like I am not able to eat sometimes at school due to their lunches. Sometimes I will wait until I go home or even wait until I go to work. I used to have some friends who were so hungry and they couldn't get lunch because of their negative balance they needed to pay, some would walk off campus to go get food that they could really eat. When I eat school lunch it doesn't give me energy, it just makes me want to sleep more because the portions aren't enough to give me that energy. As a student that knows what it's like to go through rough times with money, I want the legislature to fix this problem so that all students in public schools should be able to eat in school during lunch. I also think we should be able to get 2nds without having to pay an extra fee for it. Thank you for your attention, Mahalo

Sincerely,
Dani

Greeting: Aloha, To Whom it May Concern

Explain Who You Are: junior at Castle High School

Why do you support the bill: tell your story of how you can't eat sometimes, will wait to eat at home, your experience with getting the yellow slips with a negative balance, stories about friends who don't/can't eat, etc.

Why you care about the bill: how does lunch affect you (whether you eat or don't eat)

Call to action/last words or thoughts: what do you want the legislature to do

Closing: Sincerely, Thank you for your Attention, Mahalo

Aloha To Whom it May Concern,

I'm a junior at Castle High School, I'm a student that pays for school lunch. I often eat school lunch when it's a decently good one, but most of the time I do not. It's hard to pay for lunch when we are in tough situations at times so I go into a negative balance when it comes to it. Lunch should be free for all because where does all that money go that we spend on lunch? It sure seems like it does not get put into getting better food and more portions. Let's be able to have students not go home hungry and looking for food because they could not eat school lunch.

Sincerely,

Eryn Kealaula Kauanui

Greeting: Aloha, To Whom it May Concern

Explain Who You Are: junior at Castle High School

Why do you support the bill: tell your story of how you can't eat sometimes, will wait to eat at home, your experience with getting the yellow slips with a negative balance, stories about friends who don't/can't eat, etc.

Why you care about the bill: how does lunch affect you (whether you eat or don't eat)

Call to action/last words or thoughts: what do you want the legislature to do

Closing: Sincerely, Thank you for your Attention, Mahalo

Aloha legislators and whoever else this may concern. I am a junior at Castle High School in the automotive pathway. I am in support of the universal free meals program. In my family there's times we don't have money right away to use on the lunch bill so for a few days I don't eat lunch. It affects me and my health and students because a lot of students don't have time to get breakfast. Students are here for more than 6 hours some days and if we don't have lunch we'd be hungry for a while. I hope at the very least legislators and look at this again and take a student viewpoint or take more consideration from students.

Sincerely,

Alexander Needham. Thank you for taking your time reading this. Mahalo

First off, thank you for your leadership and commitment of service to the community. I would like to take this time to submit my testimony in support of HB1775: DOE Universal Free School Breakfasts and Lunches 2024/25. As you know the hard working people of Hawaii are facing hard economic challenges throughout the islands, this is reflected in yhe DOE student meal debt in 2022-23 was \$100K more than 4 times the amount of 2019-20. Unfortunately we are one of the few states that still allows schools to deny meals to students with a negative meal balance. What kind of trauma does this have on the employees that have to refuse a child a meal, the child who has to spend a day in school where food is being thrown away in front of their eyes while they learn hungry and the families that are struggling to get by? How much food is being thrown away if families are having struggles paying for them? Which makes one wonder how many kids are left sad and hungry, how does this impact them physically, mentally and behaviorally. Culturally we all understand that eating together and ensuring nourishment of our keiki are beliefs we can't ever lose sight of upholding. Approving this bill almost certainly begins to show the families of DOE students, most of whom get salary increases < 64% annually, that the legislative system is committed to support the families they serve and care for their children. This is critical during a time in which many basic expense and local tax increases are causing people to move out of state. Mahalo for your time and consideration in this matter.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:24:40 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zach Brown	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm Zach Brown, a junior at Castle High School, and I'm struggling with an eating disorder that's affecting my ability to have regular meals for a long time. I'm doing my best to stay healthy, but lunch has become a challenge, especially since there isn't even enough food on the plate. This eating disorder makes me not hungry, and I often find myself starving at night when I try to go to bed.

I'm not exactly sure what action I want the legislature to take, but I believe H1B1775 can make a difference. It's essential to address issues around school lunches, ensuring that students like me can focus on our education without added stress.

Mahalo for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Zach Brown

Junior, Castle High School

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:27:10 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Fitzpatrick	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Education Committee,

I am a teacher at Kūlanihāko‘i High School and I am in strong support of HB 1775 which would require the DOE to feed all our haumana free breakfast and lunch. There are so many students across the state of Hawaii that only get a meal at school. We saw how free meals during the pandemic helped our students. If you are hungry the last thing on your mind is learning how to read, do math, and work positively with your peers.

It is long past time to level the playing field and provide healthy school meals to our haumana.

Please pass HB 17785.

Mahalo,
Fitz

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:34:29 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Miguel Phillips	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Free school lunch money

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:32:30 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg Heffley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

THE US HAS ENOUGH MONEY TO SUPPORT EVERY INDIVIDUAL RESIDENT OF THE COUNTRY. NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE TO SUPPORT STRUGGLING FAMILIES.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:40:44 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I'm Hunter Tamashiro from Kapa'a in the island of Kauai, I'm in full support of this bill. I honestly think this is a small step to improving the lives of the people of Hawaii. Making school lunches free would allow more families to afford the high cost of living in the state. Most people that were born and raised and/or employed here don't make enough to live, for some it's either school lunch or keep a house. Finally, why stop at school lunch? Make Hawaii even more affordable for local families. I hope this bill is passes, this would make quality the of life for students and families a lot more better.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:42:56 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kekoa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

I am Kekoa Sohayda and I am a junior at Castle High School. I support the bill because I can't eat school lunch and being hungry in class is not the move. The Legislature should bring back free lunch so I can do my work on a full stomach.

Thank you for your attention,

Kekoa Sohayda

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:46:51 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle K.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because students need nutritious foods to function well in school. While passing this bill will help remove the cost barrier, I hope the funds going towards the meals are healthy and that students will actually finish their food instead of going to waste. On top of providing free meals, I'll suggest adding the **healthy component to the meals** plus **waste elimination program** implemented at every public school. Thank you for your kind consideration!

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:52:10 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kawena hamel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kawena Hamel-Rivera. I am a junior at Castle High School. I support HB1775 because all students should be getting free lunch. I care about it because my parents told me to stop getting school lunch because they were not able to afford it. This is why I'm asking you folks to please pass this bill.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:30:58 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Lalagos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

"Ms. I'm so hungry, do you have any food?" This is a frequent question I hear almost every day at school as a significant number of my students do not eat during the day. As we all personally know, when we do not eat anything all day it is extremely difficult to focus on learning anything or engaging in high level conversations. How often do we personally put off doing something until after we have eaten a meal so we can focus? Our students who do not eat at school do not have that luxury. Most of my students will say they do not have money on their account or are in debt. During the pandemic when school meals were funded students were fed and there was no stigma or shame around eating at school.

Universal Free School Meals would make a marked and immediate difference in the lives of my students. We would see improvements in wellbeing and academics, a reduction in food insecure households, and we would also create a more inclusive campus for all students. By providing universal free meals we could eliminate the stigma associated with receiving free/reduced meals and having lunch debt.

I wholeheartedly support HB1775; feeding our keiki is one of the most fundamentally human and just things we can do as a community.

RE: [HB 1775](#) -RELATING TO EDUCATION

Position: Strong Support

February 7, 2024

Chair Woodson, Chair Todd, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Christine Russo and I am a teacher at James Campbell High School. I strongly support this measure.

Families that come from households with limited means may not understand the process to apply for free and reduced lunch, especially if these households are not English proficient. Additionally, according to Civil Beat, Hawaii is [one of only a few states](#) with laws that allow students to be denied food when their parents fail to pay school lunch bills.

We put a great deal of emphasis on student outcomes such as test scores however if we want to improve student output we must address student input such as access to qualified teachers and healthy meals. Providing students with food security at school is one step towards helping students have their basic needs met so they can be ready to learn. Providing students with universal free lunch may also be an important tool to help decrease the chronic absenteeism that has plagued schools ever since the Covid-19 Pandemic.

For these reasons, please consider passing this important measure. Mahalo!

Christine Russo

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:56:50 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ville Mustonen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom it may concern,

I am an exchange student from Finland currently at Castle High School. In Finland school lunches are free and I think that is a hugely positive thing. Everyone has a chance to eat, so we are full and energized in class. School lunches are also an important social situation because they bring people together and give them a chance to socialize, so free lunches would benefit social life. Overall there are many positive sides. School lunches are just as important as a nice school environment. I hope that you pass HB1775.

Thank you,

Ville Mustonen

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:59:48 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaris Quisano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is [Jaris Quisano](#) and I am a junior at Castle High School.I support HB1775 because I always have to worry about whether or not I have money in my account and when I don't, I can't eat. This affects me because I wrestle, play football, run track and need food for energy. Also I need food in my stomach so I can focus and work on my assignments at my fullest potential. If I do not eat, I become grumpier than a starving lion that didn't eat in days. I care so much about this bill because I'm still growing and I need food in my body to grow by body and my brain. I want the legislature to pass this bill so all students have the same opportunity to have access to food. Please provide us with free lunch, so we can work without being tired and feeling depressed.

Thank you for your Attention,

Jaris Quisano

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:02:13 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Branden Motonaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Branden. I am a Senior who attends Castle High School. I support bill HB1775 because the food costs too much for the quality of the food. And sometimes my friends don't grab food because their account is negative. And when they don't eat lunch they get mood swings and start acting out. The Legislature should pass this bill so all students are equal in getting school lunches.

Mahalo,

Branden M.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:05:37 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kalae	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a Junior at Castle High School and I am in support of HB1775 because my friends and others I see can't eat sometimes because they have a negative balance and their lunches get taken away. I receive reduced lunch, but my dad can't afford to always pay for my sister and I, so sometimes I don't eat. Our brains function better when we have food in our stomachs, otherwise I notice that I am slow as a sloth. I am 6' 1", I am a growing boy, I am always hungry, I need energy for my classes! I want the legislature to make lunch free for all students in Hawaii, so no one needs to go throughout their day without eating

Sincerely,

Kalae Pohina

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:04:45 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rayten Kanoa-Bray	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kakahiaka,

I am a junior at Castle High School and I am in support of HB1775 because I see how my classmates are in class when they don't eat. I am fortunate to qualify for free lunch, but some of my friends have to pay, so they choose not to eat. For us teenagers, this is the time we are growing, we get so hungry we could eat a whole horse, and if we don't eat, then we get grouchy or cannot concentrate in class because our stomachs are growling. This is why I would like you guys to pass the bill so all students can eat for free.

Mahalo no ka hā'awi 'ana i kou mau pepeiao,

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:14:51 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eleu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm Eleu a junior at Castle High School and I support this bill because I have friends who can't eat school food at all because of the cost and the food isn't enough for high school kids and is not worth the pay. I care about the bill because parents shouldn't have to worry about their kids starving when they come to school. I want the legislature to give us free food and more / more healthy food because the food they give us tastes like plastic. How can the government afford to provide computers, classrooms, notebooks, and teachers but not free lunch and breakfast?

Sincerely,

Eleu

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:15:06 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zaniah	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Zaniah Majit-Gorion. I am 16 years old and a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because a lot of students, not just in Castle, but many other Hawai'i public school students come to school very hungry but can't eat anything because they ran out of money in their meal accounts and they can't afford to keep putting money in their school meal accounts. Growing up in our public school I have experienced going through receiving the yellow slips, white papers reminding me how much money I have left, and the lunch lady telling me I need to put more money in my account. It's embarrassing and just not right. I care about this bill because, being a high school student, I know what it feels like to be starving all day and having to wait until you get home. I know the feeling of sitting through my hour and a half classes with my stomach grumbling, eating itself because my account was empty like a classroom during summer break. I want the legislature to make school meals free for everyone in our public school and help out the students that really need these free meals.

Sincerely,

Zaniah Majit-Gorion

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:15:39 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dayeisha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Dayeisha Tauga and I'm currently a junior at Castle High School and I am in support of HB1775. So many days go by that I would see students in the lunch line get their lunches taken away because they don't have money in their account, how do you think that makes them feel? It breaks my heart when I witness that happening because students want to eat, they are starving and then get humiliated in front of many other students because they don't have the money to put in their account. I would witness this mostly every other day. It even happened to some of my friends and of course they were embarrassed but teachers and staff pushed it to the side like it was nothing. I know some students have the money but you can't just assume that for every student. Lunch is the most important part of my day because that's the meal to keep me going through the rest of my day and as a highschool student in public school, every single student deserves free lunch, we deserve to eat without worrying if we have enough to pay for lunch or not. If other public schools can do it, why can't the rest? It's just crazy to me that we are still fighting for free lunch. We are kids, we shouldn't have to worry about how or if we are able to get food, half of the cafeteria food gets wasted anyways so why is it so difficult to just give, especially in Hawai'i. We're talking about food now, something that we shouldn't even be fighting for, something that should have been given already. Although I am here to fight for my friends, classmates, family and any other students, I hope that one day students won't have to worry about getting the yellow strips that says their account is negative or wishing they could get lunch but can't. Thank you for your attention.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:22:34 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Suzanne Fields	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Another food related bill that enables our children and families to thrive!

Universal free school meals ensure that every child has access to a nutritious and balanced meal while in school, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Currently, 2 out of 3 struggling families are ineligible for free school meals, and the cost of school meals can be a barrier to accessing nutritious meals. Universal free school meals can alleviate the financial burden on families and promote a healthier, more equitable educational environment.

I SUPPORT [HB 1775](#), which would provide free breakfast and lunch to all public school students. This initiative contributes to better physical health and increases students' ability to concentrate, learn, and thrive academically.

Thank you!

Suzanne Fields

Haiku, HI

Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for Universal Free School Meals (HB1775). As a member of this community, I firmly believe that every child deserves access to nutritious meals, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Ensuring that children have access to healthy meals at school is not only a matter of basic human rights but also a fundamental necessity for their physical and cognitive development. Numerous studies have shown that adequate nutrition is directly linked to improved academic performance, better overall health, and enhanced cognitive function. By providing free school meals, we are not only addressing immediate hunger but also investing in the future well-being of our children and our society as a whole.

Moreover, free school meals help to alleviate the financial burden on families who may be struggling to make ends meet. In many households, providing regular, nutritious meals can be a significant challenge, and free school meals serve as a crucial support system for those in need. By removing the barrier of cost, we ensure that all students have equal opportunities to thrive academically and socially, regardless of their economic circumstances.

Furthermore, free school meals foster a sense of inclusivity and equality within our schools. They help to break down barriers and reduce the stigma associated with poverty. When all students are provided with the same nutritious meals, regardless of their background, it promotes a sense of unity and solidarity among students, fostering a more supportive and compassionate school environment.

In addition to the immediate benefits for students and families, investing in free school meals also yields long-term benefits for our society as a whole. By ensuring that our children are well-nourished and equipped to succeed, we are laying the foundation for a healthier, more prosperous future. Healthy, well-nourished children are more likely to grow into productive, contributing members of society, reducing healthcare costs, improving economic productivity, and strengthening our communities in the process.

In conclusion, I urge you to support for HB1775 free. By doing so, we demonstrate our commitment to the well-being and success of our children, our communities, and our nation as a whole. Together, let us ensure that no child goes hungry and that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Butel".

Jean Butel

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:35:59 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Railye	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Railye-Marie Makainai-Kon I am a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775. Some of my peers aren't able to afford lunch, due to not having the money for it, and parents can't pay the extra amount of \$2.50 every day, so they starve themselves and wait to eat at home. The lunch affects me in many ways, first, it is awkward to see kids not being able to eat lunch at their own school where they are supposed to feel welcomed. I want to change the legislature's mind about giving free lunches. I believe that if everyone has lunch throughout the day, they will be more focused and observant to complete work assigned to them.

Sincerely,

Railye-Marie Makainai-Kon

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:37:55 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meetu Kelen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wanted to offer my heartfelt testimony in strong support of the proposed bill advocating for free meals for all students within our educational institutions. As a concerned parent and advocate for equitable access to education and basic necessities, I firmly believe that this bill embodies the values of compassion, fairness, and social justice that are essential for the well-being and development of our society.

First and foremost, providing free meals to all students is a crucial step towards addressing food insecurity among our youth. It is an unfortunate reality that many students across our nation go to school hungry, lacking the necessary nutrition to concentrate, learn, and thrive. By ensuring that every student has access to nutritious meals, we not only alleviate immediate hunger but also lay the foundation for their academic success and overall health.

Furthermore, free meals in schools promote inclusivity and equality by eliminating the stigma often associated with receiving assistance. Every child, regardless of their socioeconomic background, deserves to enjoy a meal without feeling ashamed or singled out. By normalizing the provision of free meals for all students, we foster a culture of empathy, respect, and solidarity within our school communities.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:54:42 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kiri	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Kiri Hirota, and I believe that providing Free School Breakfasts and Lunches for our Keiki will improve the focus and mental well-being of the students.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:59:30 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanani Horito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Hawaii State Legislature

I am writing you this letter to express my concern about food security for the children of Hawaii. I am a mother of 6 children, 2 of my youngest are students at Kahuku Intermediate and Highschool. I believe that providing free breakfast and lunch for all children regardless of their financial status will alleviate hardship and burden placed on many struggling families. This is a basic need that should be met and I support HB1775.

I also believe that this is a perfect opportunity to boost our local economy by looking to our local farmers and food suppliers to become the primary resources for this effort. We should be striving to become more food sovereign by relying on internal support so that we can feed ourselves in a healthy and sustainable way. Please consider this important piece when finalizing decisions about how to feed our children.

Mahalo

Kanani Horito

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:00:05 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bryan Mih	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a pediatrician and parent of twin 2nd grade students in public school. I strongly support this measure. I have seen firsthand the effects of unreliable nutrition which can impact health and learning in keiki.

Hungry children don't learn as well. Having free school meals is proven to help children do better in school and focus on learning. The American Academy of Pediatrics supports free school meals, and a published article in the journal Pediatrics (October 2021, <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/148/4/e2020049734/181276/The-Campaign-for-Universal-Free-Lunch-in-New-York>) demonstrates the clear benefits of universal free lunch in a large school district. Universal free school meals have led to increased student test scores. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes.

Clearly, this small investment in our keiki can lead to significant benefits. Please support this important measure.

Mahalo for your consideration!

Bryan Mih, MD MPH FAAP

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:31:51 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patti Hatzistavrakis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Patti Hatzistavrakis, fully support 1775 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION. By providing all children with free healthy meals at school, they will have the opportunity to focus on and excel in their classwork, and achieve improved health outcomes (physically and mentally). Our children must be assured they will have food available daily. As the future leaders of our communities, our children deserve the opportunity to develop healthy habits and thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of 1775 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION. I appreciate the committee's consideration.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:46:25 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diliaur Tellei	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Feed our keiki! They can't learn if they are hungry. Some kids may get their only meal(s) at school which is heartbreaking. "It takes a village"--if so, we have to act like one. I'd be proud to put my tax dollars toward funding this program.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:49:41 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
malia tini	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of this bill because i believe every student should eat free no matter there parents income.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:51:20 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tehane Miyamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of this bill because I believe that all students should be able to eat and freely. some students may not have the financial support at home to be able to get the food they need.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:03:03 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
chloe hannsz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a high school student at Kapa'a Highschool. A large number of students at my school go the day without food, something that has been detrimental on our collective mental and physical health. I believe that we have a right to free school lunch, because the school and the government has the responsibility to nourish us.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:05:00 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
keegan goeas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Keegan Goeas and I am a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because earlier this year I ran out of money on my lunch account and the lady sent me to put my food back because I didn't have enough. Based on my personal experience, I wouldn't want another student to feel that type of embarrassment. I don't eat school lunch all the time, because often when I do, it hurts my stomach and just doesn't taste right. One benefit of having free lunch is that students are able to focus on their schoolwork because they are not focusing on an empty stomach. All students should be able to get lunch regardless of their family's income, so that we can all have an inclusive educational experience. Do this for the students, do this for the teachers, and do this for the community.

Sincerely,
Keegan Goeas,
Castle High School

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:08:02 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordan Ahn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Hello my name is Jordan Ahn and I am a Junior who goes to Castle High School. I am in support with the HB1775 because sometimes when i am eating the school lunch the taste is a little bit funny and it sometimes makes you lose a little bit of appetite while you are trying to eat your food; but, on the other hand when you're going to your favorite place to eat and you really like the food there then you won't be losing your appetite since the people that cook over there at your favorite place cooks better than the school chefs. While you are waiting to eat at home sometimes you feel your stomach growling because you didn't eat at school since you are starting to feel that the school lunch is not really suited for your appetite or it could be the reason that they give a little bit of food on the plate sometimes. When you receive yellow slips it could sometimes mean that your balance needs to be repaid or that you need more money in order to actually buy the school lunch since the school lunches are not free to most students.

Access to lunch or lack of thereof could affect your daily life by not having to pay for the lunch but it could affect your life by having you not be focused on school lunch or not even getting it since you don't have to pay for it anymore. The emotional and physical toll of not having a proper meal during school hours is that it could effect your mental stability on how you work or how you fo cus. It could also effect you by having you not be motivated to do things during certain situations either if you're working on something or being able to type a document out.

The action that I would want in the legislature is that I would like to make the lunches a little bit better than the ones that we have now. The importance of passing the bill for universal lunch in public schools is that it could probably impact some different perspectives on the school lunches if they are gonna continue to give some of the same things mostly every month.

Mahalo,

Jordan Asia Ahn

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:09:07 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Princess-Kirra Pagba-Pimenta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Princess-Kirra Pagba-Pimenta and I am a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because I have friends who don't qualify for free/reduced lunch but they don't eat because they have a negative amount of money in their accounts. I qualify for free/reduced lunch and my friends always tell me how lucky I am that I don't have to pay for school lunch. They say that because they wait until they go home to eat or they try to get people to buy them food outside of campus. Also sometimes I get lunch that would be for myself but instead I give it to my friend who can't get food because they have a negative balance on their account. I care about this bill because I care about the people around me who don't get lunch and how much it would help people financially at home because they might have enough money to not qualify for free/reduced but they have 3 or 4 children plus rent etc. I care about this bill because people should start thinking about the kids and how a free healthy school lunch affects kids for the better and be more energized in school. I care about this bill because I know that the DOE budget is \$2.8 billion dollars but the money they use for free school meals would be 1% of that budget, \$25 million dollars. What I would like for the legislature to do is to take free school meals into consideration and pass the bill because it would benefit the school, communities, the kids, and the parents.

Thank you for your Attention,

Princess-Kirra Pagba-Pimenta

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:09:17 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
charles schenk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a junior at Castle High School, I support HB1775 because if the food is so bad that it's not worth the money then it should be free. Some meals on the menu are mostly malnourishing, they don't give proper nutrition, they aren't even visually appealing. Throughout my time here at Castle High School I have noticed the people who can not afford or do not eat the school lunch act differently. The people not eating lunch are mentally and physically slower. They also don't participate and are overall sluggish. If the lunches were more affordable or free for everyone, student productivity would go up.

Mahalo,

Charles Schenk

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:09:18 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Misha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because, sometimes the food tastes good but only with some things. Majority of the time a lot of my friends just wait till after school and go to Windward city and get way better food than our school provides. I care about this bill because when I don't eat and it's not just me it's some kids too we give attitude after lunch cause we don't have any food in our system. I want the legislature to put their brains to good use and actually listen to the students, we don't need books. We don't even use them half the time. So maybe just, maybe they should give free healthy food. Free food will help kids not be as hangry after lunch. Free food can help with home lives. Free food should be for the majority of people.

Mahalo,

Misha Bethel

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:09:32 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paige Namahoe-Maeda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Paige Namahoe-Maeda, and I am a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because students starve during lunch for multiple reasons that connect to the enforcement of school meal fees. Some lower-income families cannot afford to pay for their children’s lunch, and larger families cannot afford to pay for all their children to have lunch. Additionally, everyone has other financial business to take care of, making it a hassle to allocate money for school lunches. It is unjust for school lunches to contribute to the stack of bills families have to pay. While there is a free and reduced lunch program to assist low-income families, the function and the operation of the program are flawed. Free and reduced lunch is provided for those whose household income is less than \$50,000, disregarding the fact that the cost of living in Hawai’i is around \$112,411. So, according to the program, families that are failing to pay bills still have to pay for school lunches. I don’t eat school lunch because it is cheaper for me to bring home lunch rather than pay for food every day I go to school. According to the Hawai’i Public Health Institute, out of the \$2 billion budget the Department of Education has, establishing free lunch would only account for 1 percent of the total budget—amounting to \$25 million. With this in mind, I urge you to support and pass this bill.

Mahalo,

Paige Namahoe-Maeda

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:10:15 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kea'aina	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm Kea'aina Cachola, a student at Castle High School, and I strongly support HB1775. Since my early days in Kindergarten, I qualified for free lunch, ensuring I always had something to eat. This has been crucial for my focus in class, as being well-fed keeps me attentive. I've noticed how friends who have to pay for lunch sometimes struggle with different moods when they go hungry. I believe everyone should have access to free lunch, as it positively impacts every student in need. Let's support HB1775 for the well-being of all students.

Mahalo,

Kea'aina Cachola

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:10:34 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Arieana Royal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Arieana Royal, and I am a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because of what school lunch is now, which is not good enough or worth getting. The school lunch now is ok, and edible, but it's definitely not something I think is worth paying for to eat. I also don't eat school lunch every day because it takes less money or time to just eat after school. This leads to me being drained or tired throughout the second half of my day. However, the fact is that we shouldn't even have to pay for it in the first place because it only takes 1% of the DOE budget to make school lunches completely free. One, not ten or even five, just 1% of the budget. This is why I am in support of HB1775 because the cost, which is usually the problem in these situations, is not.

Sincerely,

Arieana Royal

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:11:30 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Baron Kaneshiro-Hanzawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

My name is Baron and I am currently a junior at Castle High School. All students should have free lunch because students need food to be able to focus more. Students need food to have more energy throughout the day. Students also need to eat so they can function better in class. The school lunch quality is bad and people don't like it, even some teachers. The quality of the mac and cheese at school because it looks solid and the cheese looks like plastic in the container they give us. That's why students should have free school lunches.

Sincerely,

Baron Kaneshiro-Hanzawa

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:11:46 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Hunter Matsuyama. I am attending James B. Castle High School. I want to shine some light on the cost of school lunches in our public schools. I live in a three-bedroom apartment with a family of six three of those people being my siblings and my Mom and Dad. It can get pretty crowded sometimes with that being said my Dad has to work two jobs to support our big family. Our family uses a lot of electricity with one of our bills coming out to around 200 a month. On top of having to pay hefty bills, we also have to pay for school lunches. My two younger brothers are going to elementary school and unfortunately, my family doesn't meet the requirements for free or reduced lunch so my parents have to pay for their lunch whether they eat or not. Luckily for me and my sister, we don't have to pay, we have the choice to not eat, but this leads to us being very hungry (hungry/angry) this doesn't help when we have multiple tests in one day. Now before you say "cry about it" I want to share some statistics you are probably aware of. According to the Hawai'i Public Health Institute, the DOE budget is 2.1 BILLION dollars. To me, this seems like a lot of money, and Hawai'i Public Health Institute also says that free lunches would only accumulate to 1% of the entire DOE budget. I believe that you people who can pass this bill will make the right choice.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:11:57 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zhane Tafa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Zhane Tafa and I'm a junior at James B. Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because the DOE has more than enough money to provide free lunch for everyone. According to the Hawai'i Public Health Institute, IF the DOE were to provide everyone with free lunch in school, it would only take up 1% of the DOE's budget for the state. The budget for the DOE is \$2.1 billion and if free lunch was provided to students in schools, it would only cost \$25 million, which is less than 2% of the budget. Free lunch also proved to have a better effect on student's quality of learning. The Hawai'i Public Health Institute stated a statistic where in New York, the students in school were provided with free lunch resulting in high test scores as if they had an extra 6 weeks of school, however, they only had 40 weeks, the only difference was they had the lunch at no cost. I care about the bill because although I pay nothing for lunch, I have friends who starve through 6 hours of the day and yet, cannot afford to change anything about their poor diet because they have to wait until dinnertime to eat and can't even afford the price of reduced lunch. Fight for free lunch and end hunger in schools!

Mahalo,

Zhane Tafa

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:13:45 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
makamae paikuli-stride	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a junior at Castle High School, and they offer numerous opportunities for students' future pursuits. However, in addition to the many opportunities, free lunch is not one of them. I support HB1775 because many people I know have refrained from getting lunch due to insufficient funds in their accounts. Not being able to eat lunch inhibits their ability to focus in class, resulting in poor academic performance and hindering their long-term grades. Schools choosing to withhold healthy meals from students due to financial constraints may contribute to the development of chronic diseases such as depression and stress. Though I have not personally experienced the inability to get lunch, I strongly believe that students should have the freedom to eat lunch without charges, avoiding hunger throughout the school day.

Sincerely,

Makamae

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:14:44 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaileia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a student in Hawaii, I want to express the immense gratitude I feel for the free lunch program in our schools. For many of us, this program is not just about a meal; it's about stability, focus, and the chance to succeed. Living in Hawaii, where the cost of living is high, many families struggle to make ends meet. As a result, some students come to school hungry, which makes it difficult to concentrate in class and participate fully in learning activities. The free lunch program ensures that every student has access to a nutritious meal, regardless of their family's financial situation. This means that I can focus on my studies without worrying about where my next meal will come from. Moreover, the free lunch program promotes inclusivity and reduces stigma. It ensures that no student feels ashamed or singled out because they cannot afford lunch. Instead, it fosters a sense of community and support among students, knowing that we are all in this together. Beyond the immediate benefits, the free lunch program sets us up for success in the long run. By providing nutritious meals, it supports our physical and mental health, helping us stay energized and focused throughout the day. This lays the foundation for academic achievement and personal growth, empowering us to reach our full potential. In conclusion, I urge policymakers to continue supporting and expanding the free lunch program in Hawaii schools. It is not just a meal; it is a lifeline for many students, providing nourishment, stability, and the opportunity to thrive. Let us ensure that every student in Hawaii has access to the resources they need to succeed, starting with a nutritious meal each day.

Thank you for you time.

Sincerely Kaileia Apuna

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:19:19 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joy Souza-Tai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, To Whom it May Concern

My name is Joy Souza-Tai, and I am a junior at Castle High School. My concern with the HB1775 bill stands because relating to most of the students here at this school- I have experienced the sinking feeling of acquiring a yellow slip. Watching the numbers fall lower and lower into the negatives, where my family struggles to pay for my meal account.

School lunch is important for all students, and it all falls into the perspective of how would you feel if your child failed to eat during the day? How would you feel if your offspring fell into the energy soaking feeling of depression, where insecure meals left them with anxiety. According to medical experts, not eating enough would be enough to make somebody fatigued, where they couldn't focus in class.

Isn't that counterproductive? If a child is sent to school to learn, but they aren't able to eat - How does that make sense in a logical stance?

However much a parent makes for the household should not matter because parents pay taxes that could be used for free school lunch, a child should not be in debt for merely following the law and going to school to prepare for the future.

The state funds for teachers, computers, classrooms, education materials.

Why should food be any different?

Food is a necessity for life.

Food is required to survive.

No child should have to feel fear when they enter the school day, unsure when their next meal will be.

Please consider these words, and recommendations as someone who has gone through the stress of not being able to eat. Having to starve until the end of school, to eat snacks at home until my parents returned home from work.

This small change may just turn lives around for the better.

Better learning. Better living. Better circumstances.

Mahalo,

Joy Souza-Tai

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:41:13 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jamie Sarmiento	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Jamie Nicole Sarmiento, a senior student at James B. Castle High School and I support HB1775 because not all parents are financially stable, and free meals for students can help parents feel less financial burden. Free school meals also guarantee that children had access to good food.

Thankyou for your attention

Jamie Sarmiento

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:00:08 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alex Steppe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'd like to thank you in advance for considering my testimony.

Universal free lunch not only addresses food insecurity issues but also improves academic performance and overall well-being. As a Registered Dietitian and a mother, please accept my professional and personal input that proper nutrition is known to enhance cognitive function, concentration, and learning outcomes. When all students have access to a balanced and nourishing meal, they are better equipped to succeed academically, fostering a more equitable learning environment.

Moreover, universal free lunch creates unity and supports students' social cohesion. It is well known that many nutrition support programs miss a chunk of our community members in need due to qualification thresholds. Providing lunch to all across the board reduces disparities in access to needed resources and fosters a more inclusive and supportive school culture. Additionally, this initiative alleviates the administrative burden on schools, streamlining the lunch program and ensuring that valuable educational resources are directed toward student success.

Chair Justin H. Woodson

Vice Chair Trish La Chica

House Committee on Education

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1775: Relating to: Education Universal Free School
Breakfasts and Lunches**

Hearing: 08 February 2024 2:00 pm (Video Conference)

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and members of the Committee:

My name is Ashley Wong, and I am currently an MSW student at the Thompson School of Social Work program at The University of Hawaii at Mānoa. Submitted for your consideration is my testimony **IN SUPPORT of HB 1775** advocating for the provision of free meals in schools available under the school meals program in every school regardless of a student's eligibility for participation in the national school lunch program. Living in Hawai'i presents unique challenges, with families often having to make difficult sacrifices to make ends meet. The high cost of living, coupled with limited employment opportunities, places immense financial strain on many households. As a result, families are forced to prioritize basic necessities, often sacrificing nutritious meals to meet their pressing expenses.

Proper nutrition should not be a luxury, it is a necessity for every child's growth and development. By ensuring access to nutritious meals for all students, regardless of their economic background, we lay a strong foundation for promoting their overall health and well-being. This legislation not only recognizes the critical role of child nutrition but also takes concrete steps to address food insecurity by allocating funds and establishing a comprehensive program to provide school lunch subsidies to disadvantaged children. By implementing this initiative, we are not only nourishing young minds and bodies but also leveling the playing field, ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed academically.

This legislation is a beacon of hope for these families, offering much-needed relief by ensuring that every child has access to free, nutritious meals at school. By alleviating the burden of meal costs, we can help alleviate the financial stress facing families across Hawaii and empower children to thrive academically and beyond. As a future social worker, I firmly believe that supporting our children's nutritional needs is essential for their

educational progress and long-term success. I urge you to **SUPPORT HB 1775** and prioritize the well-being of our students by ensuring they have access to free, nutritious meals in school.

Mahalo ia 'oukou pākahi a pau, I humbly appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1775.

Ke aloha nui,
Ashley K. Wong
Wonga3@hawaii.edu

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:34:19 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bronson ing	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am a senior at Castle High School and I support HB1775 because It is unfair for people to pay for their lunch. I care about this because of my friends not being able to eat lunch because they can't put money into their account.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:35:27 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
logan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at Castle Highschool and I support HB1775 because free lunch can help out a lot of families who are struggling and some kids could be hungry but doesnt have money to buy lunch.I care about this because I myself have family problems and i am struggling but I still ask my mom to put money in for me even though I shouldnt be asking her to do this for me I would rather starve then lose my house and if i have a chance to get free lunch I want to take that chance.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:31:30 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aldan Chargualaf-San Nicolas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of free lunch to provide more kids lunch

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:35:45 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zyan elders	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm a senior at castle high school and I support HB1775

Because I have seen and have gotten my lunch taken away because of not having money on my account the reason I care so much is because I first hand have witnessed my grades drop from not eating

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:35:46 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tristyn Aho	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at James B. Castle High School and I support HB1775 because schools are filled with a variety of students ranging from well off parents to financially struggling parents which could help those students who cannot afford student lunches. I know many people who are not able to afford school lunch because their parents are in a financially difficult place, so allowing all students would not only help those who need it but also give fair opportunity to all students which could decrease inequality in school.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:35:47 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Braxton Ancheta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at Castle High School and I support HB1775 because I feel that it's not fair for the people that don't qualify for the free and reduced lunch when they don't have a steady income. The reason why I care about HB1775 is because it's not fair when people aren't able to have a decent lunch while other people are able to.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:36:02 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keahi Coria	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a special education teacher at Castle High School and I support HB1775 because students often come to school hungry. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, learning cannot happen if an individual's basic needs are not met. I care about this bill because there are families that cannot afford regular meals at home and school is the place where children can receive food. This is an issue of equity and equality. All students should have access free school meals so they may achieve their academic and social-emotional goals.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:36:16 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Izaiah hau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of hb1775 because my cousin would walk up to me plenty of times asking if I had food because she didnt have money in her account to buy school lunch. When kids dont get to eat they cant focus in class thats why i want this bill to be passed so all student s can eat no matyer there family's financial situation.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:36:48 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Alexis Ogihara and I am a student at kapaa high school and I am terribly disappointed that we still don't have free lunch.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:37:51 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Levi Wright	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at Castle High School and I support HB1775 because I have seen when one of my friends had their food taken away and being set to the side. Where his parents weren't able to afford to put money in his account and having to have nothing to eat through out the school day.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:38:00 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kalai Montizor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at Castle High School and I support HB1775 because I feel like family struggle to pay it and some people don't want to speak that they can't afford it. I care about this because we are the future generation and as I am apart of this generation I want to help out my peers and see them succeed.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:38:01 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kekai Adams	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at Castle High School and I support HB1775 because it helps serve kids meals everyday that are having hardtimes at home. I care about this bill because it serves kids food for the ones that want to eat and that dont have enough money to buy lunch everyday.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:39:23 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor Tuitele	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Victor Laipaise Kamakalanikapuokohala Tuitele, I am currently a senior attending at Castle High School in Kaneohe and I support HB1775 because I have quite a lot of friends who struggles financially and barely eats any lunch at school, times where I would have to share my lunch with my friends with one item out of my plate, whether its a fruit, milk, chips, or some veggies as well. I have also seen some people take away lunches from kids that couldn't afford it and I know they felt embarrassed right there on the spot, where school is supposed to be a safe space for all students, who struggles with their income, or at home, or anywhere of where the students come from. I strongly believe that all public and private schools should have free lunch meals, where it can drastically help families who struggle with ttheir own income, struggling to even put money inside of students accounts just to pay for a lunch that can barely make a growing high school student full from one entree. I say that the meals that is being provided to the students shouldn't be charged for \$3 for a simple lunch. I also strongly believe that making this huge shift, can directly impact the students future as it was said that a good lunch can also benefit a student's learning ability. If the younger generations is the future, then we must invest into them by providing them leverage when it comes to eating a simple lunch for them.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:39:39 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordan Labanon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at Castle High School and I support HB1775 because my lunch got taken away because I did not have money in my account, because my lunch was taken away I couldn't focus on school work because I was hungry.

I care about this because I do not want to hold the line in the future and put back my lunch.

Thank you for reading.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:39:36 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Po'okela Switz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at Castle High School and I support HB1775 because as a person who eats school lunch and sometimes breakfast on the daily, I need to eat to stay energized and focused during my afternoon classes. And when my account reaches the negatives I have to be careful or not even eat lunch at all because if I'm not able to pay it off before I graduate I won't be able to walk. This is why I believe the bill HB1775 is very needed not just to me or my school, but all the schools around the islands. To let us all have a chance to eat even if we don't have enough money to pay.

Mahalo,

Po'okela Switz

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:39:46 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zachary Fujinaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at Castle High School and I support HB1775 because I feel as though it would be great convenience and assist those who are not able to pay for lunch. Students are in a period in their life where they are in a state of development. Food is an absolute necessity and students should not need to pay for such an important service. I do not eat school lunch too often, but free lunch would definitely be an incentive to eat what lunch they serve at school. I know that, not just my friends and me, but the entire school would benefit greatly from free lunch!

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:41:06 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lei Fisher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure for universal free school meals. This is so important for the health & wellbeing of our precious keiki & ensuring their best chance at success in life. Please **PASS** this measure.

Mahalo,

Lei Fisher

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:41:50 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dustine Curato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a student at Castle High School and I support HB1775 because there are students that cannot afford lunch. I care about this bill because this affects not only me but my peers also, it pains me to see my peers not be able to eat lunch or have their lunch taken away because they couldn't afford it. With this bill every student will be able to eat without having to worry about how much money they have in their account or if they can afford it. Thank You for taking the time to read this.

Mahalo

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:42:47 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chayse K Nakayama-Hose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at Caslte High school and I support HB1775 because Iv'e seen kids wait in long lines to get lunch to only be stopped and told that they can't get their lunch because they don't have money in their account. I feel strongly about this because I was one of thoes kids and that affected my focus and caused me to be more hungry and irritated and hard to focus in school and able to do my work.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:44:22 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Pokipala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a parent of three children in the DOE system and I support HB1775 because to pay for all of them to eat would cost me \$750.00 a month. With the cost of living, and other bills, this is hard for me to pay, so my two older ones will only eat sometimes because they will take a snack from home or just wait till after school. I am also a teacher & when students can't eat, they can't focus or pay attention in class. If the state can allocate so many billions of dollars to the rail, what would 1% of the DOE budget do the the State budget? How can prisoners receive three free meals for so many years? How can the state put billions of dollars to the tourism industry? Our students are the future of Hawai`i, we need to mālama them, so they can be motivated to do well in school & want to make their home a better place! Please pass this bill, so all can have equal access to food!

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:47:55 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Abby Poisson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Abby Poisson; I am a resident of the Kaka‘ako neighborhood, and I am submitting testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 1775.

I strongly believe that universal free school meals is a hugely important step to take in ensuring that no child goes hungry in the state of Hawai‘i. This bill would improve the health outcomes of children in the state, who deserve the right to learn and learn at capacity. Without food in their stomachs, students are not only at greater risk for stress, depression, and choleric disease but are not in an adequate headspace to learn. When universal free school meals were implemented in other states, student test scores rose the equivalent of 6 additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in educational outcomes. It is mutually beneficial for the state of Hawai‘i to feed its children and its educational sector. We need to set our students up for success.

No child should have to worry about where their next meal is going to come from or feel that they have to skip a meal for the sake of their family. Two out of three struggling families are not eligible for free school meals. HB 1775 would ensure that all students can eat meals at school and not be forced to skip as a result of the financial burden for their families. Some children may not eat at all if not for the meals provided for them at school. Our children are our future, and they are worth the resources we can provide to them.

I kindly and strongly ask that you pass HB 1775.

Mahalo for your time and consideration!

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:49:28 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ksen warren	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a senior at Castle High School and i support the HB1775 because some family do not have the money to buy school lunch and some parents aren't able to pay for lunch automatically.then lunch should be free because you can tell when kids are really hungry.

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:52:26 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ezekiel Cummings	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am a senior at Castle High School. I support HB1775 because the cost of living In Hawaii Is too expensive so paying for their kids school food would be the least of parents worries. If the lunch Is not free It disencourages kids from eating properly to avoid being In debt.

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:03:52 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

I am in STRONG SUPPORT of this bill HB1775.

I know many families who are struggling financially.

Please consider passing this bill

With gratitude

Leilani

Send DataSend Data

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 4:43:24 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reinalyn M. Terrado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! I am testifying in strong support of HB1775, requiring the Hawai‘i Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in the department schools.

Effective July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, a family of four needs to earn less than \$44,850 a year to qualify for free school meals and \$63,825 for reduced-price meals. The current free or reduced-price meal program qualifications do not meet the needs of Hawai‘i's struggling families. With food prices soaring and costs of living on the rise, families are struggling to make ends meet. For some students, school breakfasts and lunches are the only meals they receive in a day. Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) ensures that every child, no matter their circumstances, has the nutrition they need to grow and thrive.

Mahalo for considering my testimony.

Reinalyn M. Terrado, Parent

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 3:20:00 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jassica	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Every student in the State of Hawaii deserve to eat. No matter your social economical status. Kids wake up early to come to school they might not eat before they get here. If money is not deposited in their meal account they will starve the whole day until they get home. Which means they will act out in school and not perform their best. Students will better perform and be happy if the state provides free breakfast and lunch daily.

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 4:51:31 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karen L Worthington	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing from Kula, Hawaii, on the island of Maui, where my children's public schools are Title I Schools. Having programs such as the universal free school meal program is essential to ensure the educational success and health and well-being of our keiki. Providing free meals to all children also ensures equity across children and reduces the stigma between keiki who are eligible under the current rules and their peers who are not eligible. Importantly, many children in homes that do not currently qualify for free or reduced meals are from households struggling with food insecurity. Finally, a growing body of research shows that providing material and financial supports to families, such as free meals for children, reduces child abuse and neglect. Research citations are available here: <https://www.chapinhall.org/project/a-key-connection-economic-stability-and-family-well-being/>.

I urge you to support HB1775 and other bills that provide economic supports for children and families.

Best regards,

Karen Worthington

karen@karenworthington.com

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 6:32:31 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Casandra Simonson, MD	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is Dr. Casandra Simonson, I have been a pediatrician in Maui at Malama I ke Ola for nearly 10 years and my opinions are my own. My clinic is a federally qualified health center or safety net clinic with near 90% Medicaid patients. I am speaking today to urge you to support funding for free school lunches as it is undeniably our kuleana. I take care of the children who will be most affected by the lack of free meals. I do many CPS intake exams on children and typically the neglect I see is not because parents do not care about their keiki, it is usually that they cannot care for them- maybe they are ill, maybe fighting addiction, maybe they just lost everything in a fire, including their ability to care for their child.

Schools have been providing free meals throughout covid and some parents of younger children have never had to plan for or budget for school meals before. Placing the responsibility of navigating and paying for their child's school meals will be difficult for many families, and this means kids will go hungry while they try to figure it out. Hunger causes the body to feel unsafe, distracted, the children will feel they are in a fight or flight mode. This is the opposite of what the body needs to be ready to learn. I know what this is like from my own lived experience. I know the pain of hunger in my gut and pushing thru the day without food and gorging on package noodles once I finally got some. I know the shame of my lunch account being over-due and pretending like I was just too cool to eat school lunch, when actually my account was deep in the red. I know the confusion I felt as to why my parents couldn't get it together enough to pay the bill. Did they not care about me? Of course they did but they faced many barriers working paycheck to paycheck and were far too proud and too ashamed to ask for help. Kids cannot concentrate without food. They might act out or struggle to be kind or patient. Hunger is a real thing, there's probably a medical billing code for it! Keiki will also gorge on unhealthy food once they can eat and will end up overweight – which is counter-intuitive and makes food insecurity even harder to spot.

Public school is meant to give all American children a level playing field, a strong education to start their lives with no matter what circumstances they were born into. They cannot take advantage of this fully without access to reliable healthy food. It is well proven that school meals may be the only meals kids have that day. I have patients who are left to feed themselves with whatever they can find after school while their parents work. No child should face the shame and pain that comes with hunger. Schools should be their refuge, their safe space, the calm in their storm, somewhere reliable where they feel cared for. As a doctor to the most vulnerable, as a mom of 3, as a previously food insecure child, and as a community member please consider free school meals our collective kuleana. Let's help the parents navigate this without worrying about

payment or confusion about paperwork. Let's take this off the plate of families suffering after the wildfire. Our state does so many things right for our keiki, lets show other states what our keiki can do when they feel cared for, safe, and ready to learn.

Thank you,

Dr. Casandra Simonson, MD

casandracck@gmail.com

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:20:41 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Pickett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

As a public high school teacher in Kailua-Kona, I am writing to express my strong support for the bills under consideration (H.B.1540, H.B.1775, S.B.2327) that would provide universal free lunch for all students in Hawai'i schools.

Universal Free School Meal (UFSM) programs have proven to be invaluable in ensuring that all students have access to nutritious meals, regardless of their economic circumstances. These programs remove barriers to participation and help address food insecurity among students, which is a growing concern in our community.

In my own classroom, I witness firsthand the impact of food insecurity on students who come to school hungry or skip meals. Many of my students rely on the snacks I, and my colleagues, provide with our own money to get through the day. Implementing a UFSM program would ensure that no student goes hungry and that all students have the fuel they need to learn and thrive.

I urge you to support these bills and prioritize the well-being of our students by providing universal free lunch for all. Thank you for considering this important issue.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Pickett

To: Hawaii State House Committee on Education and Committee on Transportation
Hearing Date/Time: Thursday 8, 2024, 2:00pm
Place: Hawaii State Capitol, CR 309 & Videoconference
Re: Judith Ann Armstrong supports HB1775 Relating to Education

Dear Chairs Rep. Justin H. Woodson and Rep. Chris Todd, Vice Chairs Rep Trish La Chica and Rep. Darius K. Kila and members of the Committee on Education and Committee on Transportation

I, Judith Ann Armstrong, support HB1775 Relating to Education.

The Case for Universal Free School Meals

1. Promote Equity and Justice

1. To qualify for free school meals, a household of 4 would need to make less than \$44,000 per year. This leaves 2 out of 3 Hawai'i households that struggle to make ends meet ineligible for free school meals.

2. Reduce Childhood Food Insecurity

1. A 2022 study of schools implementing UFSM found an almost 5% decline in household food insecurity.

3. Improve Academic Performance

1. Students who eat better do better than students who miss meals. Studies of UFSM in other states have shown large test scores and academic improvements at participating schools.

4. Eliminate Stigma

1. By making meals universally free, UFSM eliminates the stigma associated with having school meal debt, or receiving free or reduced-price meals, creating a more inclusive and supportive school environment.

5. Leverage Shared Investment

1. UFSM requires a significant financial investment (approximately \$25.5M) and there are a web of funding options and community partnerships available to ensure equitable implementation, including federal funding and state and local resources.

A

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB1775.

Sincerely,

Judith Ann Armstrong

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 2:36:11 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha EDN Chair and Committee Members,

I was raised in Hawaii and attended public school. There were children that were sent to school without eating Breakfast, home lunch or lunch money and these children ended up with compounded problems. One needs to feed their brain in order to learn, and this is an easy fix.

Please pass this important legislation!

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Lisa Hallett

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:10:49 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jet Travis Inouye	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a junior at Castle High School and I am in support of HB1775 because of things I have observed due to people not being able to be fed. Many children fall into a range of full-price lunches, but they don't make enough money to support themselves at home fully. HB1775 will prevent such fear of being unable to eat or not living at home. I have had issues with school lunch as I feel that I am using too much money just to eat at school every day. I eat lunch every day at school and I don't feel that the food I eat should cost so much due to it being an important part of the day for many and it could be one of the only chances people eat in a day for some. The effects of HB1775 will provide better moods, better grades, and overall better results. If HB1775 is passed, the future of the next generation will be a safer and more secure environment where food is not an issue at school. It allows the people to feel safer knowing the next generation will have less of a chance to develop issues due to nutrient deficiencies or from the fear of running out. I feel that if the legislature passes HB1775 then not only the future of this generation will be better, but the following generations will also benefit from it.

Mahalo,

Jet Travis Inouye

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:12:45 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aiden Zupsich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Aiden Zupsich and I wonder why do I have to go to school and learn all day long on an empty stomach because I don't have enough money to buy school lunch? But prisoners can be murderers, drug dealers, and child predators and sit around all day in a jail cell and get free breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Why do the youth of this country get treated worse than prisoners by not getting free lunch? The benefits of free lunch, are students will perform at a better level in academics because as a student it is difficult to concentrate on an empty stomach. I humbly ask that you pass this bill so all students no matter their parents income may get free lunch!

Mahalo,

Aiden Zupsich

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:13:03 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kasey leong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Kasey Leong. I'm a Junior at Castle High School, I am in support of HB1775 because even though I do not eat school lunch very often because I know that I can just eat at home, every time I go to buy school lunch I always see at least one person get told that they do not have enough money in their account to purchase lunch and they have to put it to the side and leave the line. I believe that allowing this bill to pass would do nothing but good for the students of the Hawaiian Islands.

Thank you for your time,

Kasey Leong

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:14:06 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyssa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Hi I'm Alyssa and I'm a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because I have friends that have ID cards and I know people who can't eat because their parents don't refill their money. The lunches that we have are either cold or it tastes like cardboard. Get us better school lunches and make them free. Thank you for your Attention.

Mahalo,

Alyssa Oreskoivch

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:14:46 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
shanelle bartlett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Shanelle, a current junior at Castle High School and I am in support of HB1775. I support the bill because I have personal experience with the lack of access to lunch every day. For a year, school lunch was free for students at my school and I was able to eat every day. At that time, I was getting good grades and being able to eat every day for free. Throughout middle school, I always applied for free lunch and qualified for it, however, my application was rejected although my household receives EBT. I was given another chance to fill out the form, but it was given to me a day before the due date and I didn't have time to fill it out. Throughout the past two years, I have had to bring my own lunch to school, but it has to be charged to my EBT. I aspire to be an Engineer in the future and that requires me to take difficult classes, where I need to eat to learn. I'm having difficulty keeping up, especially in my classes later in the day. How are we going to expect students to be successful and grow without access to a basic need?

Mahalo,
Shanelle Bartlett

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:15:31 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
colt kalaukoa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a junior at Castle High School and the problem is sometimes we can't eat school lunches because we have no money in our accounts. On top of that, school lunch sucks. If we're paying for it, make it worth it. Prisoners are getting their meals free daily for however long they are in jail, But high schoolers can't get free lunch for 4 years. I learn better on a full stomach for sure and We also need the right nutrients to give our body the best chance to learn. We need the legislature to give us free school meals to learn in school and do our best.

Mahalo

Colt Kalaukoa

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:15:50 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaleikaumaka Camara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Kaleikaumaka Camara and I am a junior at Castle High School. I support HB1775 because of how important food is to education. Eating food in school is important because it helps people feel recharged and gives nutrients needed to learn. Many students are also not able to put down 2 dollars everyday for an entire school year. Making lunch free would really help out those who struggle financially, which is basically everyone living in Hawaii these days. I care about the bill because I care about the needs of others around me and because I think that it is wrong and sad that my peers say that they're hungry because they could not afford to get lunch. Eating lunch also gives our bodies energy and helps your performance in school. Overfall, I think that school lunch should be free or make the qualifications for reduced or free lunch more lenient so that my friends and other peers do not go hungry and can perform in school at their best level.

Mahalo,

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:16:01 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aztin Pitt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, to whom it may concern.

I am Aztin Pitt, a junior from Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because we are forced to go to school and get education. We go to school for around 6 hours and 5 out of 7 days of the week, yet we have to pay for lunch. If you want kids to get a better education, you need to at least provide the food for them. Without food kids will be starving and not be focused on their education. According to NO KID HUNGRY “80% observed the negative impact of hunger on concentration, 76% saw decreased academic performance, 62% saw behavioral issues increased, and 47% noticed children getting sick more often.” I care about this bill because paying for lunch takes a lot of money from my parents when they have their own bills. I want the legislature to change this and give everybody free lunch because people could be struggling more than what you think.

Mahalo,

Aztin Pitt

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:19:04 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
logan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I believe that we should have free lunch because some people most likely a lot of people dont have the money to pay for lunch

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:20:23 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nakoa Suzukawa	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Nakoa Suzukawa and I am a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because i am chinese and my mother always said that anything free is good. On a serious note, I am in support of HB1775 because of my friends. I myself have free lunch, but my friends do not. They usually complain throughout class that they are hungry, but they don't want to pay for school lunch because it's too expensive and the food usually isn't worth it. That's why some of my friends dip class to go grab a bite at McDonalds or L&L. I have some friends that dont sneak out of school to grab a bite so they just starve or ask other people for food. They usually say that they're tired and they cant wait for school to be over. When I eat lunch I feel contempt and have more energy to do the work I'm supposed to. I think every family would deeply appreciate it if you were able to give free lunches for the students of Hawai`i. Thank you for your attention.

Mahalo,

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:21:18 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thomas Hardy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, To Whom it May Concern,

I am a junior at Castle High School and I am in support of HB1775 because at times I am way too tired to wake up earlier than 6:00 in the morning and at times we do not have food to make for school. Everyday I go through school plus a 2 to 3 hour wrestling practice. Some days I go the whole day and practice without eating anything because I don't have the money to make or get food and it takes a very big toll on my body. The secure life for a kid should be You eat, You Work, You eat, You sleep and You repeat. But at times I am only able to work and sleep and not be able to eat at times. I care very much about this bill because I need to be very strong and I do not want my body to get weak again and hurt from being hungry. I had injured my right shoulder and arm with bicep tendonitis because I was so tired from not eating enough or in general and I got very small and lost a lot of weight and strength. At this moment I need the legislature to look at the kids and how they feel and how they are living. I need them to think bigger and in better favor for us.

Mahalo,

Thomas Hardy

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:22:24 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeremiah	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Jeremiah Lopes I am a junior at Castle High School.

I am in support of HB1775 because sometimes I'm able to pay for my school lunch, but almost all the time I can't eat because I don't have money to eat on my account. I have to wait until I get home or one of my friend's share their food with me. I also always get yellow slips showing my negative balance because I have no money in my lunch account. If I don't eat lunch it causes me to lose focus in class a554nd fall asleep because I have an empty stomach. If I do eat, I'm able to focus, I'm not tired, and my brain is functioning in class to where I'm able to think. What would be helpful is to allow free lunches and better lunches because some of the lunches aren't good and there's always a little amount for us growing teens. So if you guys could allow free lunches to students that can't afford it, kids like me would be very helpful towards us and grades will start going back to normal or higher than normal.

Sincerely, thank you for Attention

Mahalo,

Lauren Pokipala

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:33:41 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kainui Ramos-Barrionuebo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha To Whom it may Concern,

I am a junior at Castle High School & I am in support of HB1775 because we get yellow slips handed to us when we don't have money in our accounts and some of us don't have the money right away to pay it back. When this happens we can't get lunch till we pay it off. I feel like if we do get free lunch it will affect everyone in a positive way like being motivated to do work in class because we aren't starving. This bill will help me and so many more students in many ways. I would like it the legislature to pass this bill so we can all have food in our bodies to help us function in school.

Mahalo,

Kainui Ramos-Barrionuebo

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:37:30 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
angelina	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Students should be able to have free lunch because some students don't get the chance to eat when they go home. Some students don't have the money to afford buying food or groceries. Some students have to come to school to eat breakfast and to eat lunch because sometimes food isn't available at home. That is why school lunch should be free. The state and schools want higher test scores, but don't give us the food that we need so we're hungry through out the day. Students need to eat in order to function. Please make this happen so school lunch can be available to all students.

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:49:05 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marjorie Maertens	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of House Committee on Education,

I am writing in strong support of HB 1775 which would provide free breakfast and lunch to all students in DOE schools starting with the 24-25 school year. It is well known that children need to have their basic needs met to be fully engaged in their learning. Food and nutrition is a basic need that many Hawai'i families struggle with, living paycheck to paycheck, but do not meet eligibility to qualify for free school lunch. Students who are food insecure are more likely to struggle in school and experience higher rates of poor physical and mental health outcomes. This bill would help to combat food insecurity and childhood hunger in our public schools.

I work at a DOE school as an office assistant. It is DOE policy to deny a meal to a student that has a negative balance of \$25 or more on their lunch account. I have witnessed a student go through the lunch line with their plate of food, scan their ID, only to have their lunch taken away by an adult because they didn't have enough money in their account. This is incredibly stigmatizing. I've also seen students come into the office to check their lunch balance and walk away knowing that they don't have enough money to eat. The last thing a child at school should have to worry about is where their next meal is going to come from. I humbly urge you to pass this bill for the benefit of our public school students.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony,

Marjorie Maertens

LATE

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 9:17:06 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONGLY SUPPORT!

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 12:03:21 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Logan Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Logan Thompson and I am a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because when I go to pay for school lunch, I see a lot of people who are hungry and wanting lunch get their food taken away due to the lack of funds in their school account. It also affects student athletes that need fuel to perform for after school sports. Most times I wait till I go home after school and eat due to the costly price of school lunch. I also see a lot of my friends with a yellow slip saying that they have a negative lunch balance. Out of a \$2 billion dollar budget, a free lunch program statewide would only cost \$25 million dollars, 1% of the budget. I think if bill HB1775 gets passed, it will be easier for all students to get free lunch, and also will help parents that are struggling with money to make sure their kid eats. Would you want to see your own children struggle in school and starve due to the cost of school lunches?

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 11:58:49 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Michael Irons and I am a junior at Castle High School, I am in support of HB1775 because, my family makes just enough money to where I don't qualify for free or reduced lunches, however I am not able to put any money into a school account for lunch, this results in me not being able to eat until I get home at the end of the day. In my experience whenever I am able to eat lunch I am normally much happier, much more productive, and much more open to learning in school. This is why I hope that the legislature passes HB1775, so that I would be able to eat lunch without having to worry about the need to pay it back.

Mahalo,

Michael Irons

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 12:00:04 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nolan Markpol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Nolan Markpol and I am a junior at castle high school. I am in support of HB1775 because I have a friend from another school who's family isn't the most wealthy. I am in support of this cause my friend needs to eat lunch in order to focus and stay healthy so I would appreciate it if we could have free lunch because I wouldn't have to worry about my friend's education and his overall health. I care about this bill cause I guarantee there are other people out there who are struggling like my friend who needs to get lunch but can't because of their money. Also according to Hawaii Public health institute it would cost about 1% of the budget to give free lunch to all. Being hungry in school is like how a lion would act if they didn't eat for a week . Also, if we don't eat we can't focus, think, and pay attention especially if we have sports it's twice as hard running on an empty stomach. I would appreciate it if you guys could take a moment and think about us students who have to pay for lunch, while others get free lunch, and some who struggle everyday just to get food. So what would you want if you were in the position if your parents couldn't afford to buy lunch?

Mahalo,

Nolan Markpol

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 12:05:32 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Shimabukuro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Uilani Shimabukuro and I am a junior at Castle High School. I support HB1775 because whenever I get a yellow slip I can't eat school lunch. If I have a negative balance, I am not able to get lunch.. Therefore, I would have to wait until I get home to eat or if someone will give me a little snack to munch on. If I don't eat then I will start to feel very tired, a little nauseous, and my brain won't function well throughout the day. Also, I need to eat so I have fuel for soccer practice after school. The government needs to make school lunch free so we wouldn't worry about not being able to eat at school and starve.

Mahalo,

Uilani Shimabukuro

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 12:12:09 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
alia cyd bruhn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Alia Cyd Bruhn and I am a junior at Castle High School. I am in support of HB1775 because some kids' parents actually don't have enough income to pay for their child's lunch. There are friends of mine who don't eat because they have no money in their account and I feel really bad. When I don't eat my focus when trying to do work isn't good because I am just worried about getting food. I hate when I can't focus on work because I end up not getting it done or I just procrastinate. If I feel that way when I don't eat I wonder what my friends feel like when they don't eat.

Mahalo,

Alia Cyd Bruhn

LATE

HB-1775

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 12:31:26 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Darrylboy Cobb-Adams	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Darrylboy Cobb-Adams and I am a junior at castle high school. I am in support of HB1775 because with having school lunch for me to be free now it is a very good thing to have. Because while being hungry it is very hard to learn and you can't focus while being hungry and get tired. Without teens being able to eat at school teens would not have good grades. Also because some of my friends are hungry asking for my lunch cause they don't have enough money or don't qualify to have free school lunch. How is it that prisoners get three free food with breakfast, lunch and dinner a day and that we the students don't get free lunches at school?

Mahalo,

Darrylboy Cobb-Adams