

SB-789

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 6:53:00 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/5/2025 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha

I OPPOSE SB 789 which repeals requirement that Department of Education set school cafeteria meal price at no less than half the cost of meal preparation. I oppose because in reading through the bill it is not clear to me that this does not give the DOE permission to charge more? After everything we know about the school food issues, it seems that by now we would have a viable, secure path to making sure that school cafeterias/food sources can pay their bills but also that all of our keiki our fed.

Mahalo for reading my testimony

C. Burghardt

Kou, Oahu

SB-789

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 10:49:14 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/5/2025 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marissa Baptista	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! As a voting constituent residing in the Salt Lake/Moanalua neighborhood (Wakai/Senate and Ichiyama/House), I am submitting my support for SB789. The money earned from selling the meals should NOT be at least 50% of the amount it costs to make them. Instead, I support a substitute plan that requires the Hawai'i Legislature and Department of Education to collaborate and implement the Universal School Meals program for all public and charter school haumana in the state for the school year 2025-2026.

Mahalo,

Marissa Elizabeth Ku'uipo Baptista



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 |

Honolulu, HI 96813

P: 808-533-1292 | e:

info@hawaiiifood.com

Executive Officers

Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale Grocer, *Chair*

Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp., *Vice Chair*

Jayson Watts, Mahi Pono, *Secretary/Treasurer*

Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *Executive Director*

Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*

Derek Kurisu, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*

Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*

Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, *Advisor*

Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*

Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Education

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 5, 2025

TIME: 3:05pm

RE: SB789 Relating to School Cafeteria Meals

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure. Students' access to healthy meals is critical to academic success and achievement. Access to nutritious meals also promotes students' short term and long-term health, improves behavioral outcomes, and improves overall wellbeing.

Ensuring that all keiki have access to enough food should be a top priority of the State.

For some students, school meals may be their only consistent source of food.

We support removing the requirement that Department of Education set school cafeteria meal price at no less than half the cost of meal preparation. We believe that all Keiki should have access to nutritious school meals and we support any steps needed to make that happen. We urge the Committee to pass this measure, and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for S.B. 789 – Relating to School Cafeteria Meal Costs
Senate Committee on Education
Wednesday, February 5, 2025, at 3:05PM

Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. 789, with suggested amendments and comments provided. This bill would repeal the requirement that the Department of Education set school meal prices at least half the meal preparation cost. We wholeheartedly support any measure that would expand access to free school meals, and this bill would remove one significant statutory obstacle to that goal.

Beyond removing this statutory limitation, we hope that the legislature will make the bold move to provide universal free meals for all students. This is because school meals are one of the government's most powerful tools for delivering good nutrition to children and supporting families. In Hawai'i, three in ten households with children face food insecurity.¹ While some of these children qualify for free meals, any family of four that makes at least \$47,000 does not,² leaving two-thirds of the families over this threshold still struggling to cover their food costs.³ For some Hawai'i children, school meals are the only balanced, nutritious meals they receive in a day.

Research consistently links proper nutrition to better educational and health outcomes and conversely, students who miss meals tend to perform poorly in school.⁴ Meals are more than just nutrition—they are an essential school supply. Ensuring that every student has access to the nutrients necessary for optimal learning is a critical step in helping to close achievement gaps.

We are pleased that the Hawai'i legislature is acknowledging this important issue, and considering this first step in the right direction. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Hawai'i Foodbank, "The State of Food Insecurity in Hawai'i," 2023.

² Hawai'i State Department of Education, "Free and Reduced Price Meals Program," 2025.

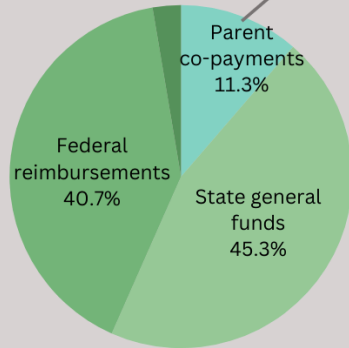
<https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/FreeReducedLunch.aspx>

³ United for ALICE, "ALICE in the Crosscurrents: An Update on Financial Hardship in Hawai'i," 2024.

⁴ Amy E. Schwartz & Michah W. Rothbart, "Let Them Eat Lunch: The Impact of Universal Free Meals on Student Performance," Maxwell School Center for Policy Research, July 2019.

ESTIMATED COSTS

The current proposal would cover the cost of parent pre-payments for school meals - an estimated \$15.3M.



DOE School Food Services Branch Revenues by Funding Source, School Year 2023-24

	Existing Participation Rates	Projected Participation Rates ¹
Breakfast	\$1,384,463.70	\$4,390,294.20
Lunch	\$13,872,568.20	\$21,695,778.29
Breakfast & Lunch	\$15,257,031.90	\$26,086,072.49

1. Assumes a 6.8% increase for lunch and 12.1% increase for breakfast over SY23-24 average daily participation rates.

Note: These cost estimates represent 0.7% to 1.2% of the overall DOE budget.

FUNDING UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL MEALS

How Can Hawai'i Fund UFSM?

Closing the capital gains tax loophole could bring in

\$134.8M

in 2025, going up to \$166.9 million by 2030 annually to the state.²

Increasing tax on non-owner occupied home sales over \$4M could bring in

~\$278M

in annual revenue.³

How Have Other States Funded UFSM?

General Funds (Education Fund Appropriation)	CA, ME, MI, MN, NM
Voter-passed tax measure that reduces income tax deductions available to households earning \$300,000 or more	CO
Voter-approved 4% tax on incomes over \$1 million	MA
\$.03 property tax rate increase	VT

2. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, 2023 analysis.

3. Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice, Preserving Hawai'i, How the State Conveyance Tax Can Re-Invest Nonresident Wealth Into Our Island Communities, 2024 analysis.

The Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice advocates for economic justice for and with Hawai'i's people. We envision a Hawai'i that puts its people first—where everyone can meet their basic needs while living happy, healthy and creative lives.



SENATE BILL 789, RELATING TO SCHOOL CAFETERIA MEAL COSTS

FEBRUARY 5, 2025 · EDU HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports SB 789, relating to school cafeteria meal costs, which repeals requirement that Department of Education set school cafeteria meal price at no less than half the cost of meal preparation.

Hungry children can't learn.

Currently, under HRS §302A-405, the DOE is required to set school meal prices at an amount that covers half of total student meal costs. This led the department to propose significant increases in student meal prices earlier this year (along with proposals to increase a range of other student fees). HIDOE requested approval from the Board of Education to nearly double the cost of school meals over the next four years. School lunches would have increased from \$2.50 for elementary and middle school students and \$2.75 for high school students to \$4.75 and \$5.00 by the 2028-2029 school year. This would be tremendously harmful for working families, who already face one of the highest costs of living in the nation.

According to a new ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) report, nearly half (46 percent) of ALICE households struggle with consistent food access. The report also found that over one-third (37 percent) of households have considered leaving Hawai'i due to high living and

housing costs. **As we repeal the statutory provision that compels the DOE to raise student meal prices, we should also support free school meals for all, which would expand access to food security for children who may not otherwise be able to eat.** Two out of three families that are struggling with Hawai'i's cost of living are currently ineligible for free school meals through the federal free lunch program. Studies have shown that schools that implement free school meals experience gains in Math and English test scores equivalent to six additional weeks of school.

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." School meals cost less per student when more students participate in a free meal program. An article 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.

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

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

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

Date: 02/05/2025

Time: 03:05 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: SB 0789 RELATING TO SCHOOL CAFETERIA MEAL COSTS.

Purpose of Bill: Repeals requirement that Department of Education set school cafeteria meal price at no less than half the cost of meal preparation.

Department's Position:

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) provides comments on SB 0789.

Amending the bill to remove the requirement that families pay at least half of the cost of a school meal places the School Food Service Branch annual food budget at risk for a shortfall. The Department would instead request that rather than repealing the requirement that the threshold instead be lowered to one-fourth of the cost of preparing meals. This would also align with language in the Department's administrative package bill, SB 1394.

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



LATE

HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS
Chair

John A. Burns School of Medicine,
Department of Pediatrics

Titiimaea Ta'ase, JD
Secretary

State of Hawai'i, Deputy Public Defender

Carissa Holley, MEd
Treasurer

Hale Makua Health Services

Debbie Erskine
ARCH-MEPS Consulting LLC, Owner

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

Jennifer José Lo, MD
Hawai'i Health Partners

Misty Pacheco, DrPH
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Justin Puckett, CPA, MBA
Humana

Kathleen Roche, MS, RN, CENP
Kaiser Permanente

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

Garret Sugai
HMSA

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

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 Network

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 5, 2025

To: Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

RE: Support for SB 789, Relating to School Meal Costs

Hrg: Wednesday, February 5, 2025, at 3:05 PM, Conference Room 229

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating, Active Living² (HEAL) Coalition **supports SB 789**, which repeals the requirement that the Department of Education set school cafeteria meal prices at no less than half the cost of meal preparation.

One in three families in Hawai'i face food insecurity, leaving many students to go hungry throughout the school day. One in ten keiki in Hawai'i skip meals due to food insecurity. Hawai'i can ensure all students are able to eat by removing this provision and providing free school meals for all students.

Meal Revenues Make Up Only a Tiny Fraction of the Education Budget

The Department of Education has an annual budget of over \$2 billion, with meal revenues totaling around \$20 million per year, or just 1% of the overall budget. Collecting meal prices from students is not necessary to keep the Department of Education functioning. Students receive free education regardless of income level and the nutrition they need to learn should be free too.

Half of Struggling Families are Currently Ineligible for Meal Subsidies

The current federal free and reduced-price school meals programs fail to support all students in need. Eligibility is limited to families earning below 130% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for free meals and below 185% for reduced-price meals, even though a family needs at least 300% of the

¹ Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

² 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.



FPL to meet basic living expenses. As a result, half of the families earning below this threshold receive no meal assistance at all.³

This large assistance gap leaves behind many ALICE families who are struggling to make ends meet. As a result, countless students go hungry throughout the school day, impacting their health, well-being, and ability to learn.

Health Risks

Students experiencing food insecurity face a higher risk of stress, depression, and chronic disease.⁴ By failing to ensure they have access to meals during the school day, we are undermining their health, development, and future success. Removing the cost provision will expand access to nutritious meals, helping students receive the nourishment they need to grow, learn, and thrive.

Please support SB 789 and pave the way for free school meals for all keiki.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nate Hix".

Nate Hix
Director of Policy and Advocacy

³ "Poverty Status in the last 12 months." U.S. Census. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=s1702&g=040XX00US15>

⁴ "Food Insecurity and Psychological Distress: A Review of the Recent Literature". Candice A. Meyers. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7282962/>