



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 01/29/2020
Time: 10:00 AM
Location: 211
Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 0594, SD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes and appropriates funds for a school meal subsidy program within the department of education to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the free and reduced price lunch program, subject to income eligibility. (SD1)

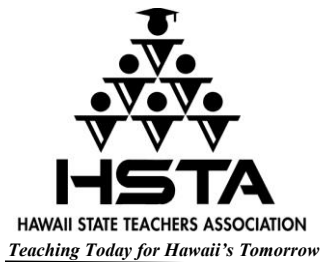
Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) supports SB 594, SD1. The Department believes that a subsidiary program would greatly benefit those who do not qualify for free meals. There are currently 89,000 paid students and another 15,000 students eligible for reduced-price lunches.

The Department believes that a subsidiary program for over 100,000 students who do not qualify for free meals would greatly benefit the students of Hawaii. In 2018, California created a universal breakfast program. In 2020, Vermont may be the first state in the nation to offer free meals to all students according to Hunger Free Vermont. Vermont Bill S.223 would mandate all schools serve free lunch and breakfast.

This bill would reduce negative balances for families who struggle to make ends meet. Therefore, this bill would be of great benefit to our students and families. The additional cost for a universal program would be \$40,000,000 to the state.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is committed to delivering on our promises to students, providing an equitable, excellent, and innovative learning environment in every school to engage and elevate our communities. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.



Corey Rosenlee
President

Osa Tui, Jr.
Vice President
Logan Okita
Secretary-Treasurer

Wilbert Holck
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION

RE: SB 594 SD1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

WEDESDAY, JANURARY 29, 2020

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SB 594, SD1** relating to education. This bill establishes and appropriates funds for a school meal subsidy program within the department of education to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the free and reduced price lunch program, subject to income eligibility.

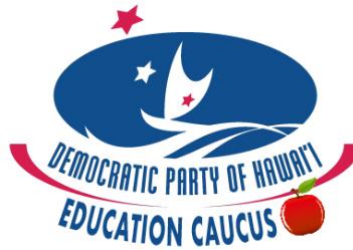
In Hawai'i, food insecurity is one of the most pressing manifestations of overall socioeconomic inequality. Over 70,000 public school students eat free or reduced-price meals in our state, though only 40 percent eat school breakfasts. However, there are students with families who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch, but still struggle to pay for lunch at school, especially if they have multiple children and they are also required to pay for bus transportation. This struggle of our students and their families is not acceptable. Hawai'i ranks 47th in school breakfast participation rates among qualifying students. Out of the 14 other states with laws addressing school meals debt, 11 are stronger than Hawaii's 2017 law, which created a one-week grace period for students after their school meal accounts hit zero or negative balances.

Congress established the National School Lunch Program, in 1946, and School Breakfast Program, fully implemented in 1975, to ensure that low-income students are properly nourished. Yet, many local families struggle to provide nutritious meals for their children. In our public schools 47 percent of all public school students qualify for the Department of Education's free and reduced lunch program, a number that has risen by 20 percent since 2007 because of economic decline and cost of living increases. Not only low-income students are, again, less likely to receive adequate meals at home, but even those students whose families do not qualify for free or reduced lunches are left hungry, leaving them without the calories necessary to perform basic academic tasks. Cases of chronic hunger can lead to achievement gaps, concentration loss, illness, increased absenteeism, behavioral problems, depression,

and misdiagnosed learning disabilities. Thus, providing a decent meal for our impoverished, as well as those students whose families are above the qualification for free and reduced lunch, children—or in this case, ensuring that those meals aren't unnecessarily taken away—is an educational imperative, and not something that children should suffer through. It is something we need to resolve for all of our students.

To ensure that all our students are well-fed and ready to learn, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.

LATE



SENATE BILL 594, SD1, RELATING TO SCHOOL LUNCH REFORM

JANUARY 29, 2020 · SENATE WAYS AND MEANS
COMMITTEE · CHAIR SEN. DONOVAN DELA CRUZ

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports SB 594, SD1, relating to education, which establishes and appropriates funds for a school meal subsidy program within the department of education to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the free and reduced price lunch program, subject to income eligibility.

Currently, 47.39 percent of students enrolled in the HIDOE are considered economically disadvantaged, including 3,604 students that experienced homelessness in the 2019-2020 school year. Moreover, 181 schools, including charter schools, are classified as Title I, meaning at least 47.2 percent of each school's total student populations is impoverished. While 84,993 students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs, many students remain on the cusp of poverty and attend schools that do not meet the minimum poverty requirements to qualify the entire school for reduced-price lunch. In turn, these students may be unable to afford the basic nutrition needed to actively participate in the learning process.

Hawai'i has the highest cost of living in the nation. To boost student achievement, we should ensure that our keiki are hungry for knowledge by ensuring that they're never hungry for food.

LATE

SB-594-SD-1

Submitted on: 1/28/2020 1:56:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 1/29/2020 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Louise Barr	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Wailuku, HI 96793

January 28, 2020

The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair

The Honorable Senator Gilbert Keith-Agaran, Vice-Chair

Hawaii State Senate Ways and Means Committee

Dear Senators DelaCruz and Keith-Agaran,

I am writing this letter in support of SB594.

As a retired school teacher, I remember all too well how students struggled in class (in all grades) when they were living in unstable circumstances at home and where regular daily meals were not a given. There were also students from well-run families who simply did not have enough income to afford the lunch program. These students also exhibited stress from all the insecurities. This kind of stress prevents students from concentrating on their studies and can create psychological problems.

Some schools here on Maui, provide students a brown bag with some snacks when they cannot afford lunch just so they have something in their stomach. While it is a very caring gesture, it is by far not sufficient and lacks nutrition. Moreover, the students carry shame for being poor as they stand out as such.

School is often the only place for students where they can relax, feel safe and learn and it should be available to all children. I am very grateful that SB594 has been introduced and I hope you approve of it.

Sincerely,

Louise Barr

