



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

Date: 02/26/2016

Time: 09:40 AM

Location: 211

Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

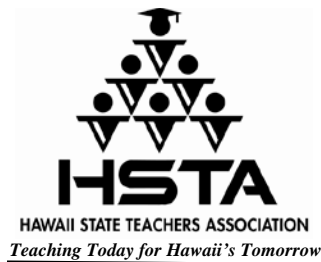
Title of Bill: SB 2426 RELATING TO STUDENT MEALS.

Purpose of Bill: Prohibits denying a student a meal for the first: (1) thirty days of a semester while the student's application for free or reduced lunch is being processed; or (2) week the student's meal fund balance is zero or negative. Authorizes DOE to adopt rules or policies on the collection of funds for negative student meal balances.

Department's Position:

The Department of Education supports the intent and overall concept of SB 2426 as it includes initiatives supportive of our goals and objectives. However, we are concerned about the cost implications generated by this proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

RE: SB 2426 - RELATING TO STUDENT MEALS.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2016

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Tokuda and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SB 2426**, relating to student meals, **with suggested amendments**.

In Hawai'i, food insecurity is one of the most pressing manifestations of overall socioeconomic inequality. Over 70,000 public school students eat free or reduced-price meals in our state, though only 40 percent eat school breakfasts. Hawai'i ranks 47th in school breakfast participation rates among qualifying students.

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. According the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, in Hawai'i, 15.3 percent of families experience food insecurity, meaning that "they do not always know how they will afford their next meal." An additional 3.9 percent are "very low food secure" families that have significantly reduced food consumption because of economic hardship.

At the same time, 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. Low-income students are, again, less likely to receive adequate meals at home, 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 children—or in this case, ensuring that those meals aren't unnecessarily taken away—is a moral and educational imperative.

To make this measure more effective, however, we suggest an amendment to proposed subsection §302A-404(b)(2) to read: “Within **two weeks** following a student’s meal fund account reaching a zero or negative balance.” Many parents, particularly from low-income families, are paid on a two-week cycle. Our requested amendment will prevent children whose balance runs out during the beginning of a pay cycle from being denied access to school meals, something that could be particularly important to families facing unexpected financial emergencies.

Hungry students cannot focus. To ensure that our students are well-fed and ready to learn, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



February 24, 2016

Senate's Committee on Way and Means
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Room 229
Honolulu, HI 96813

Hearing: Friday, February 26, 2016 – 9:40 a.m.

RE: **SUPPORT for Senate Bill 2426** – RELATING TO STUDENT MEALS

Aloha Chairperson Tokuda, Vice Chair Dela Cruz and fellow committee members,

I am writing in SUPPORT to Senate Bill 2426 on behalf of the LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i. SB 2426 takes some of the needed steps to ensure that our all of our public students receive a nutritious meal. We wish there were a funding source attached to this bill to help cover the meals for students that may fall through the cracks.

For far too many of our public students their school meal(s) are the only guaranteed meal(s) they receive all week. So ensuring that there was a dedicated funding source for the meals for our students in need is a necessity in the eyes of the Caucus. Without this funding source it does put these meals in jeopardy, especially for our schools that service our students in the more economically challenged areas.

We do acknowledge that the bill takes into account the students that have parents or guardians that take the time to fill out the applications for reduced or free lunches but what about the other students? Which ones are those you ask, well here are a couple of real life examples:

- 1) The students with parent(s) that are working 2-3 jobs to keep a roof over their heads and barely have time to sleep let alone fill-out paperwork.
- 2) One of 125 homeless students that sleeps on the streets of Honolulu without any Government or family support.
- 3) The students that have parents that view asking for assistance as shameful and won't fill out the needed paperwork.

We live in one of the richest countries on earth and no keiki should go hungry. Please keep in mind a hungry student cannot learn and therefore making it harder if not impossible for them to reach their ultimate potential.

The Caucus hopes that you will take these concerns into consideration when making your decision and passing this much needed bill.

Mahalo nui loa,

Michael Golojuch, Jr.
Chair