

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: 02/09/2023

Time: 02:30 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 0620 RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS.

Purpose of Bill: Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, requires public schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students. Appropriates funds.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) is in support of HB 620.

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, including breakfast and lunch. It supports free meals if the State can subsidize what is not received through Federal claim reimbursements.

Additionally, the Department supports maximizing opportunities for student access to school meals. We are currently looking at appropriate meal service models, such as breakfast in the classroom or Grab and Go. Second-chance breakfast is presently implemented in the school meal program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
February 9, 2023

The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Woodson and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB620 RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS.

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB620**, which, beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, requires public schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students. Appropriates funds.

Malnutrition in children is one of the main reasons for developmental delay and may worsen or cause a disability. Members of the Intellectual/Developmental Disability (I/DD) community are disproportionately lower income, and any programs designed to relieve financial pressure from families will also benefit our community. Families with parents or children who have I/DD but do not qualify for Free and Reduced Price Lunch can still meet their financial needs through this program.

All children attending schools under the Hawai'i Department of Education deserve access to healthy and filling lunches. HB620 will ensure that all families who need aid, including I/DD community members, can ensure their children get the food they need.

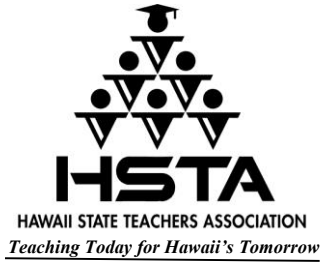
We recognize that this bill is similar to others, and we equally support the intent of the bills this session which reduce or eliminate the cost of food in our school.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB620**.

Sincerely,

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

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



1200 Ala Kapuna Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819
Tel: (808) 833-2711 ♦ Fax: (808) 839-7106 ♦ Web: www.hsta.org

Osa Tui, Jr.
President
Logan Okita.
Vice President
Lisa Morrison
Secretary-Treasurer
Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 620 - RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2023

OSA TUI, JR., PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports HB 620**, relating to school meals. This bill, beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, requires public schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students. Appropriates funds.

Student success demands a nourished body and mind. Too often, our children come to school hungry or without access to quality medical care, leaving them lurching through the school day, rather than learning instructional content.

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

As noted in the bill, the Department of Education estimates that as many as 15,000 students each year are considered "gap" and come from gap families who do not qualify for the National School Lunch Program, but struggle with food insecurity nonetheless. **This bill seeks to help provide free breakfasts and lunches to all enrolled students, thus will prevent any child from not being able to eat breakfast and lunch, or being stigmatized for not having enough funds on their account to pay for breakfast and lunch as well.**

Cases of chronic hunger can lead to achievement gaps, concentration loss, illness, increased absenteeism, behavioral problems, depression, and misdiagnosed learning disabilities. Thus, providing a decent meal for our impoverished children is a moral and educational imperative.

For the sake of our students' wellness, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



HIPHI Board

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University of Hawai'i at Hilo

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Kaiser Permanente

May Okihiro, MD, MS
John A. Burns School of Medicine,
Department of Pediatrics

Titiimaeta Ta'ase, JD
State of Hawai'i, Deputy Public Defender

HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community Health
Worker Initiative

COVID-19 Response

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

Date: February 9, 2023

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair
Representative Jeanné Kapela, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Education

Re: Strong Support for HB620, Relating to School Meals

Hrg: Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 2:30 PM, Conf Rm 309

The Obesity Prevention Task Force (OPTF), a program of Hawai'i Public Health Instituteⁱ (HIPHI), is in **strong support of HB 620**, which would provide free school meals for all students.

Everyone Deserves Access to an Education and Food

Access to free public education is not given only to those who can least afford it. All students, regardless of income, are given the opportunity to attend school. 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, families miss or cannot afford lunch payments, or they must budget away from other areas of their life. 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 \$42,000 per year are not eligible for free school meals but earn less than half of what is needed to be self-sufficient.ⁱⁱⁱ These 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.

Ending the benefits cliff is necessary to stop penalizing families earning slightly more than the maximum benefits threshold. A family with two children loses thousands of dollars in benefits simply because their income is slightly more than the allowable amount.

Creating a Culture for All

The stigma that exists for students and families who participate in the free and reduced lunch program is real and can lead to increased bullying, among other negative outcomes. It is not something that should exist. Judgment should not be placed upon parents or their children due to their financial situation.

In addition, running out of lunch money happens far too often to many families. The angst that is felt by a student whose balance is low is not something that any child should experience. Freeing all of our families from the burden of maintaining a lunch fund is a benefit to all of Hawai'i. This program will support all students to feel welcomed. Students cannot be ready to learn unless their basic needs are met. Ensuring that all children are being fed helps to meet those needs.

Please pass this bill to create a Hawai'i where all students have access to school meals.

Mahalo,



Nate Hix
Food Access Policy and Advocacy Coordinator
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

ⁱ Created by the legislature in 2012, the Obesity Prevention Task Force comprises over 60 statewide organizations and makes recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and healthcare environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents. The Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI) convenes the Task Force and supports and promotes policy efforts to create a healthy Hawai'i.

Hawai'i Public Health Institute is a hub for building healthy communities, providing issue-based advocacy, education, and technical assistance through partnerships with government, academia, foundations, business, and community-based organizations.

ⁱⁱ

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

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/annuals/2021/2021-read-self-sufficiency.pdf>

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



Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: House Committee on Education
Re: **HB 620 - Relating to School Meals**
Hawai'i State Capitol and via videoconference
February 9, 2023, 2:30 PM

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB 620, relating to the school meals**. This bill requires public schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students, beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Currently, students qualify for free lunch in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) if their families earn up to 130% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and for reduced-price lunch if their income is between 130% and 185% of the FPL.

Especially with the FPL underestimating the true extent of poverty in Hawaii,¹ many families that pay the full price for school meals can't make ends meet. For example, a family of four that makes \$60,000 per year doesn't qualify for free or reduced price lunch,² while the "bare-minimum costs of basic necessities" for that same family is more than \$100,000, according to *ALICE in Hawai'i*.³ 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.⁴ Schools benefit from reduced administrative burdens because they no longer need to collect school meal applications or meal payments. Students see better academic performance and nutrition. Currently 92 DOE schools and 14 charter schools already provide universal free meals,⁵ and during the pandemic all schools provided free meals, thanks to federal COVID funding.

We estimate that if this bill were to provide free breakfasts and lunches to all students, and there was no increase in meal participation, it would cost about \$19.2 million per year. That's based on the free, reduced-price and paid student participation in school meals in Hawai'i during the 2018-19 school year⁶ and the current school meal prices.

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

Thank you,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

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

²

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

³ <https://www.auw.org/sites/default/files/pictures/ALICE%20in%20Hawaii%20-%202022%20Facts%20and%20Figures%20Full%20Report.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20220504.114330/>

⁵ <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/CEP.aspx>

⁶ <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/SchoolMealsReport2022.pdf>



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for H.B. 620 – Relating to Education
House Committee on Education
Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 2:30PM

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support (with comments) of **H.B. 620**, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education (HIDOE) to cover the costs of school breakfast and lunch for all students.

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 get in a day.

Federal eligibility for free or reduced price meals require that households earn below 130% of the federal poverty level (\$44,850 annually for a family of four in 2023). However, Hawai'i's costs of living require that a family with two adults and two school age children make between \$70,000 and \$80,000 to survive.²

The federal government covered the full cost of all school meals during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing much needed relief for families that were struggling in an unstable economy. In prior years, school meal debt would still occasionally reach as high as \$60,000 - \$70,000 by the end of the year. However, once meal fees returned post-pandemic, the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE) saw a rise in school meal debt unlike they had ever seen before, reaching over \$90,000 by November of 2022.

We appreciate the inclusion of breakfast in H.B. 620, and in particular the provision to maximize participation in school breakfast using breakfast after the bell and other innovative breakfast serving strategies. Appleseed has worked with public and charter schools on expanding access to school breakfast and are confident that many Hawai'i schools would benefit from these models, thereby ensuring more children start the day with a healthy breakfast. Our calculations (see attached one page brief) show that including a free breakfast each day in addition to lunch would only be about 8 percent of the overall cost of a universal free meal program for the state. In addition, having a nutritious breakfast has been shown to be critically important to children's success in the classroom.³

While we support the intent of this bill, we would like to encourage the committee to consider the following amendments to ensure that the policy has the greatest impact:

1. **Appropriate program funds to Hawai'i Child Nutrition Programs (HCNP) office.** In section

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

² Aloha United Way. Hawai'i Household Budgets for each county (2018)

³ Food Research and Action Center. Research Brief: Breakfast for Learning. Retrieved online at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/breakfastforlearning-1.pdf>

5 of the bill, the funds are appropriated to the HDOE. Although HCNP is currently housed within HDOE, it is a separate agency that oversees all federal child nutrition programs in the state. This will ensure that the program is accessible to charter and other independent schools in addition to public schools.

2. **Consider making the program permanent.** California, Colorado, and Maine have created permanent state-funded universal free meals programs, eliminating the need for the legislature to revisit this issue year after year.

Thank you for considering these comments and suggested amendments in your deliberation of H.B. 620. As shown in the attached one page brief, six states have already passed policies to fund universal free meals for students, and 22 others (Hawai'i included) are deliberating policies this year. We are pleased that the Hawai'i legislature is paying attention to this important issue at a time when it is clearly gaining momentum across the nation. Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

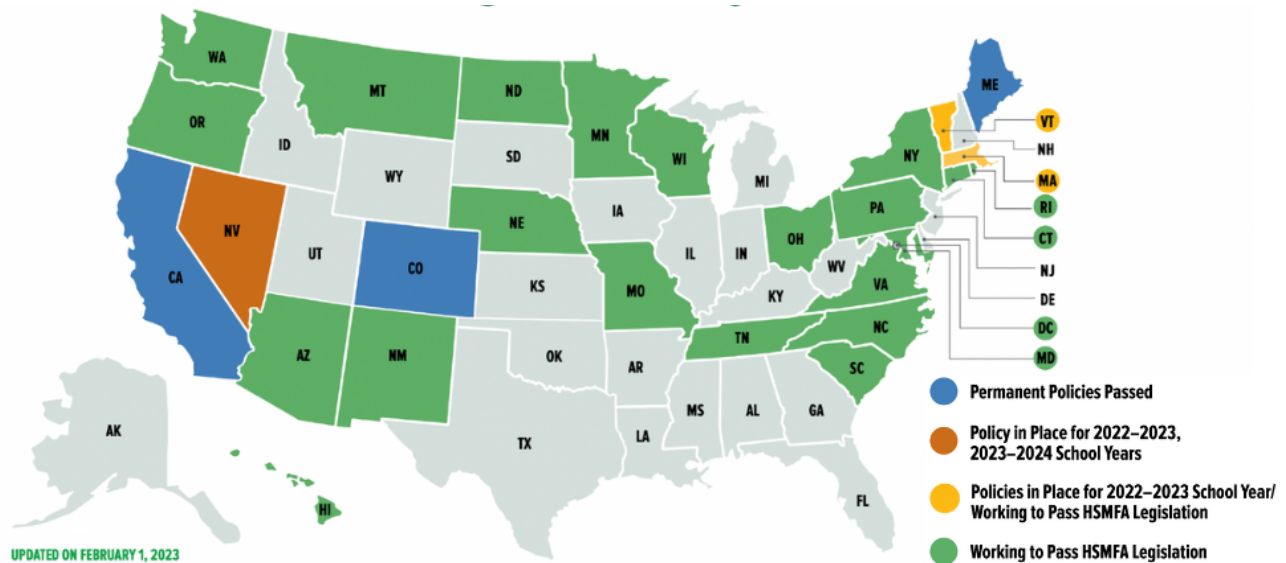


Healthy School Meals for All

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

Universal free school meals allow all enrolled children in a school that operates the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program to receive free breakfast and lunch, regardless of their family's income.

Six states have already passed policies to offer free meals, and many others are prepared to follow suit. The Hawai'i legislature is currently considering the following bills that would do the same: [S.B. 154](#), [H.B. 540](#), [H.B. 620](#), & [H.B. 1462](#).



Estimated State Costs⁴

	Pre-pandemic participation rates ⁵	Projected participation rates ⁶
Breakfast only	\$1,504,764.00	\$1,685,335.68
Lunch only	\$17,750,687.40	\$18,993,235.52
Breakfast & lunch	\$19,255,451.40	\$20,678,571.20

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 SY2020-21 eligibility data for reduced price and paid students for all public and charter schools.

⁶ Assumes a 7% increase for lunch and 12% increase for breakfast over SY18-19 average daily participation rates for reduced price, and paid students (USDA estimates).

HB-620

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 3:18:16 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Rainbow Family 808	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rainbow Family 808 supports HB620. Please pass this bill.

Mike Golojuch, Sr., Secretary/Board Member



HAWAII

AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

OFFICERS

John Bickel, President
Alan Burdick, Vice President
Doug Pyle, Secretary

Melodie Aduja
Keola Akana
Juliet Begley
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DIRECTORS

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Jenny Nomura
Stephen O'Harrow

Bill South
Michael Vernon

MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 23404
Honolulu
Hawaii 96823

February 7, 2023

TO: Chair Woodson Members of the EDN Committee

RE: HB 620 Relating to School Meals

Support for a hearing on Feb. 9

Americans for Democratic Action is an organization founded in the 1950s by leading supporters of the New Deal and led by Patsy Mink in the 1970s. We are devoted to the promotion of progressive public policies.

We support HB 620 as it would provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students. This would do two things. First it would ensure all children are fed a couple meals a day. Second it would eliminate any possible stigma to getting free meals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Bickel, President



House Committee on Education

February 9, 2023 - 2:30 p.m.

Testimony Re: H.B. 620: Relating to School Meals

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 620:

Universal Free School Meals, which would require the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students beginning in the 2023-2024 school year.

Ensuring all students have equal access to nutritious meals is one of the best ways to promote their educational and emotional development, reduce behavioral problems in the classroom, and increase positive academic outcomes in our schools. The National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program are the two largest child nutrition programs in the United States. A [recent study](#) found that U.S. children receive their healthiest meals at school, demonstrating that school meals are one of the government's most powerful tools for delivering good nutrition to children.

Offering universal free school meals is a lifeline to Hawai'i's struggling families that make more than the income eligibility limit, but not enough to afford school meal prices. Federal eligibility requirements dictate that only students from households earning below 130% of the federal poverty level (\$44,850 annually for a family of four in 2023) are eligible for free school meals in Hawai'i. Yet, a household *survival* budget for a family of four is \$90,828.

33 percent of households across our state known as asset-limited, income constrained, employed (ALICE), are caught in this chasm between making too much to qualify for meaningful assistance, but not enough to survive and feed themselves nutritious food.

Aloha Harvest

County of Hawai'i

Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development

Hawai'i Appleseed

Hawai'i Children's Action Network

Hawai'i Food Bank

Hawai'i Good Food Alliance

Hawai'i Public Health Institute

Kōkua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center

Lanakila Pacific

Malama Kaua'i

Maui Food Bank

Parents and Children Together

The Hawai'i Food Basket

Supersistence

Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center



Aloha Harvest

County of Hawai'i

Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based
Economic Development

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Hawai'i Children's Action Network

Hawai'i Food Bank

Hawai'i Good Food Alliance

Hawai'i Public Health Institute

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Center

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Supersistence

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Center

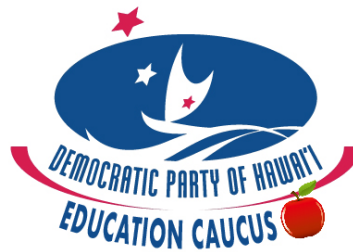
This leaves our keiki vulnerable to missed meals, lunch shaming, and an ever-growing amount of school meal debt—as much as \$90,000 for the first four months of the 2022-2023 school year alone.

Unfortunately, Hawai'i is also one of only a few states with laws that allow students to be denied food when their parents fail to pay school lunch debt.

[According to a 2022 report](#), the state appropriates \$23 to \$28 million annually to supplement the cost of food operations for the Department of Education. Utilizing school meal participation rates pre-pandemic and projected increase in participation, conservative estimates place the cost of universal free breakfast and lunch in Hawai'i near \$20.6 million per school year (not reflecting any changes in administrative costs). This is an investment the state should make in and for our schools, our families, and our keiki.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Hawai'i Hunger Action Network is composed of advocates statewide dedicated to connecting communities and taking action to ensure all people in Hawai'i have enough food to live healthy, dignified, productive lives.



HOUSE BILL 620, RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS

FEBRUARY 9, 2023 · HOUSE EDUCATION
COMMITTEE · CHAIR REP. JUSTIN H. WOODSON

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 620, relating to school meals, which, beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, requires public schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Hungry children can't learn.

A recent study released by the National Bureau of Economic Research focused on the federal National School Lunch Program's Community Eligibility Provision, which allows schools where many students qualified for free or reduced-price meals to provide a free meal to all students. The study examined whether the provision of schoolwide free meals through the Community Eligibility Provision impacted school suspension rates and **estimated that the chances of being suspended multiple times fell in both elementary school and in middle school.**

Moreover, a 2021 study by the Brookings Institute found that schoolwide free meals improve math performance. This is further bolstered by research conducted by the Food Research and Action Center, which has noted that **students who participate in school breakfast programs have improved attendance, behavior, academic performance, and achievement.** Studies have

clearly demonstrated the link between school meals and student success, which is especially important as schools and educators continue to strategize how to combat the loss of opportunity to learn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, providing free school meals will improve overall health outcomes, both now and in the future. Thirty million students rely on schools to provide them with breakfast and lunch every day in the United States. Those who participate in the school meal program consume breakfasts and lunches of higher nutritional quality than nonparticipants and are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables. **Participation in the school breakfast program is associated with lower body mass index (BMI), lower probability of being overweight, and a lower likelihood of obesity.**

More Americans are sick than they are healthy: half of adults have diabetes or prediabetes; more than half of adults have cardiovascular disease; and 3 in 4 adults are overweight or obese. Healthcare costs account for 29 percent of state budgets and 28 percent of the federal budget. As the National Education Association has stated, through universal free school meals programs, “We can grow generations of healthy eaters and save our country billions.”

Notably, school meals cost less per student when more students participate in a free meal program. An article entitled in *Nutrients* entitled “Universal Free Meals Associated with Lower Meal Costs While Maintaining Nutritional Quality” found that **schools that participated in a universal meal program spent 67 and 58 cents less per lunch and breakfast**, respectively, while maintaining the same nutritional quality. Cost savings are especially important as many schools may face continuing budget cuts.

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

Kris Coffield · Chairperson, DPH Education Caucus · (808) 679-7454 · kriscoffield@gmail.com

HB-620

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 2:38:47 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT

HB-620

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 2:55:16 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT

This is something that is long overdue! Students who are hungry, research shows, find it a struggle to concentrate and participate.

COMMENT: Ss should also be allowed to bring the food in their backpack to eat as a snack if they don't finish (like fruits) because many need that. OR we should have snacks available and the educators can stop providing.

HB-620

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 5:21:39 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Pcola_Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is deplorable to tell any child, " you have no money in your account" and turn them away. Income levels should not be used for eligibility! All children should have breakfast and lunch FREE!

HB-620

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 8:37:44 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Kern	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 1, 2023

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sarah Kern and I am a resident of Lihue, Kauai and a teacher at Chiefess Kamakahahei Middle School. I am testifying in strong support of HB620 to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students beginning in the 2023-24 school year. Students should not have to worry about whether they have money in their lunch accounts each day. Teachers, administrators, and other school staff should not have to spend our own money providing meals for students when they don't have funds in their accounts. All students should have access to healthy meals at school every day so that they can have the nourishment they need to focus on their academic and personal growth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Mahalo nui loa,

Sarah Kern

HB-620

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 7:26:45 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

Providing nutritious meals to our children is essential for their overall health and well-being, and it also helps to ensure that they are ready to learn and succeed in the classroom.

Furthermore, this bill provides a significant opportunity for our local farmers to supply fresh, locally grown produce to schools, which will not only support our local agriculture industry, but also provide healthier food options for our children. With the current economic climate and growing food insecurity, this bill will make a real difference in the lives of Hawaii's families and help to create a brighter future for our children.

HB-620

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 9:10:41 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexandra Morales	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Mr. Woodston and Mr. Yamashita,

My name is Alexandra Morales. I am a sophomore at Kalaheo High School and I would like to testify in support of House Bill 620 relating to school meals.

I believe that school meals should be free because it would greatly improve student health. The CDC states that “students who participate in school meal programs consume more whole grains, milk, fruits, and vegetables during meal times and have better overall diet quality, than nonparticipants”. It is extremely important for students to have balanced and healthy meals as it contributes to cognitive and physiological development. Furthermore, the Food Research and Action Center says that school meals reduce food insecurity, poor health, and obesity, all of which contribute to overall student health.

In addition to improving students' health, free school meals would also improve academic performance. The Healthy Schools Campaign says that healthy meals boost concentration, cognitive function, focus, test scores, and classroom behavior. On top of this, research conducted by the School Nutrition Association reveals that students who eat breakfast score 17.5% higher on standardized math tests. From this information, it is clear that access to school meals would greatly benefit students academically.

Lastly, free school meals would support students who do not qualify for free and reduced lunch but still struggle financially. I have witnessed this problem firsthand. Many of my friends and peers do not qualify for free and reduced lunch however their parents struggle to support their family and oftentimes they have more important things to spend their money on, such as sick family members. Other times, students are embarrassed that they qualify for free and reduced lunch and therefore opt out. Because of this, I have watched many of my peers go without breakfast and lunch. If we were to pass House Bill 620, my friends and peers would not have to go the whole day hungry because they do not have the financial means to purchase meals.

Overall I support house bill 620 related to school meals because it would improve students health, increase academic performance, and allow all students the opportunity to eat meals. I strongly urge you to consider this house bill 620, thank you for your time.

HB-620

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 9:19:57 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Felicia Sendrey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Representative Justin H. Woodson

Representative Lisa Marten

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita

Representative Lisa Kitagawa

From: Felicia J. Sendrey

Subject: Support of House Bill 620, Relating to School Meals

Aloha, I am Felicia Sendrey, a sophomore at Kalaheo High School. I would like to speak in support of House Bill 620, as it states that all school meals would be free of charge to all enrolled students at public schools starting with the 2023-2024 school year.

As a student myself I have seen and experienced going without food during the day. I believe that children who are less fortunate should not have to experience school on an empty stomach. According to the University of Rochester Medical Center healthy eating during adolescence is important for the body, as it is changing and growing at this time. Many teens need more than the usual amount of food at this time because they are going through growth spurts.

By giving this option for students, many won't have to worry about staying attentive for their classes. We need teens to prioritize their classes and by providing food to keep them energized, we are giving them that chance.

I ask you, to please vote in favor of this bill, to help the students of Hawaii who can't afford food. Thank you for your time, mahalo!

HB-620

Submitted on: 2/9/2023 8:21:22 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/9/2023 2:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

To: Justin H. Woodson, Chair

Lisa Martin, Vice Chair

Members of the House Committee on Education

Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Members of the House Committee on Finance

From: Zoe FitzGerald

Subject: Support of House Bill HB620, Relating to School Meals

Aloha everyone! My name is Zoe FitzGerald, and I am a sophomore at Kalaheo High School. I testify in support of House Bill 620 and would like you to vote in approval of this bill.

Free meals provided to students during school will reduce childhood hunger. In a state with high cost living conditions, such as Hawai'i, many students are financially in need of a free meal that is given at school. Free lunches would also limit food stigma. When students received reduced lunch prices, they may face bullying or rude remarks. If we make lunch free for everyone, no student will feel this way.

The passing of the Bill HB620 will help reduce students that go hungry every day as well as reduce bullying and food stigma related to reduced lunch prices. Thank you for your consideration and time, and I hope you support and vote yes on this bill.