



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

Date: 01/30/2024

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 2402 MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR FOOD SERVICES.

Purpose of Bill: Makes an emergency appropriation to provide moneys for the Department of Education for its food service operations.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 2402.

The Department's School Food Services Branch (SFSB) has a projected shortfall of \$20 million for fiscal year 2024. Several major factors have contributed to the current budget shortfall, including high inflation of the price of goods, relatively static federal meal reimbursement, and unchanged school meal price rates.

Inflation throughout and following the pandemic has been the largest factor driving the SFSB's budget shortfall. In school year 2018-2019, the year immediately preceding the pandemic, food and milk costs were \$40.4 million or 35% of the program's overall cost. In school year 2022-2023, food and milk costs had grown to \$67.1 million, making up 48% of the program's total cost.

The Department is very appreciative of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) efforts to increase reimbursement rates in the past few years. However, the current meal pricing and federal reimbursement rates have been insufficient to cover cost increases experienced by the SFSB. The Department is aware that the USDA will conduct a school meal cost study for the Department in school year 2024-2025 to consider Hawaii for a higher reimbursement rate.

Providing nutritious meals to students is a critical part in the growth and development of Hawaii's keiki and is an investment in their future and for the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Education
Tuesday, January 30, 2024; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2402 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR FOOD SERVICES.

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. 2402, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR FOOD SERVICES.

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 appropriate \$20 million in general funds for fiscal year 2023-2024 to cover the fiscal deficit experienced in food service operations.

For many of Hawaii's families, the only consistent source of food for our children has been the meals provided at the public schools.

According to the Department of Education, it accumulated a deficit of over \$20 million for its school food service operations because of inflationary cost increases. In school year 2022-2023, more than 80 percent of the Department's food costs increased by 42 percent, resulting in the need for additional funds.

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.

Testimony on House Bill No. 2402
Tuesday, January 30, 2023; 2:00 p.m.
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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.



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TO: Committee on Education

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: January 30, 2024
TIME: 2pm
PLACE: Conference Room 309

RE: HB2402

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.

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

HFIA is in strong support of this measure. Unfortunately, in Hawaii 1 in 6 keiki face hunger. As this measure notes, for many children their school meal is often their only regular meal during the day. Research shows that receiving free or reduced-price school lunches reduces food insecurity, obesity rates, and poor health. We encourage the Committee to pass this measure to ensure that the Department of Education has the funds they need to continue this vital program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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To: House Committee on Education
Re: **HB 2402 – Making an emergency appropriation to the Department of Education for food services**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
January 30, 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 2402**. This bill makes an emergency appropriation to provide moneys for the Department of Education for its food service operations.

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. All students can participate in school meal programs, and some students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals, providing some economic relief to families that need it the most.

Research shows that school meals are nutritious, as they must meet specific nutrition requirements which include fruit, vegetables, and whole grains. School breakfast is associated with better attendance rates, fewer missed school days, and better test scores.¹ For some students, school meals are the most nutritious, and possibly only, meals of their day.

Over the past few years, our entire state, including our public school system, has faced much higher food costs.² We hope you can support our schools by providing these emergency funds for school meals.

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.cdc.gov/healthyschools/nutrition/schoolmeals.htm>

² https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex_honolulu.htm