



HB1775 HD1
RELATING TO EDUCATION
House Committee on Finance

February 23, 2024

1:00 p.m.

Conference Room 308

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) provides testimony in **SUPPORT of HB1775 HD1**, which would propose amendments to Section 302A-404 and Section 302A-405 of the Hawai‘i Revised Statutes, specifically addressing the provision of universal free school breakfast and lunch in department schools. This legislation is crucial for addressing the challenges faced by the Native Hawaiian community, particularly in the realm of education and nutrition.

OHA plays a vital role in advocating for the well-being of Native Hawaiians. A sizable proportion of Native Hawaiian households lack access to an adequate and nutritious food supply. This nutritional deficiency has been linked to adverse impacts on health, cognitive development, and educational attainment.

There is a clear correlation between nutritional well-being and academic success. Students who experience food insecurity are more likely to face challenges in concentration, memory retention, disciplinary actions by the school, and overall cognitive function, ultimately hindering their educational success. By providing universal free school breakfast and lunch, HB1775 addresses a critical aspect of the multifaceted issue affecting Native Hawaiian students.

This legislation aligns with the values of equity, social justice, and a commitment to the educational success of Native Hawaiian students. We believe this bill can address food insecurity among Native Hawaiians, improve educational outcomes, and contribute to the overall well-being of our community.

OHA defers to the Department of Education on costs and implementation. We believe that providing food security for all public school children is a worthy investment. However, we recognize the constraints of our state budget given the costs borne from the Maui fires.

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS HB1775 HD1**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.



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

Date: 02/23/2024

Time: 01:00 PM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Finance

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1775, HD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

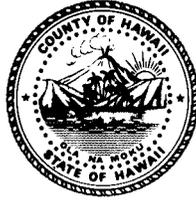
The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) provides comments and concerns on HB 1775, HD1.

The school meal program operates in each of the Department's non-charter schools and offers meals to its students in elementary through high school. 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. It supports serving one school breakfast and one school lunch to any student enrolled in a Department school if the Department receives funding to subsidize what is not received through Federal claim reimbursements.

The cost to fund this legislation is at minimum, \$32,685,203.77 at the current meal participation rates, but ranges due to several variables we cannot account for at this time. These variables include meal participation and labor increases, as well as food and supply cost increases. For example, currently, there is approximately 50% lunch participation. If that were to increase to 75%, the need would be at minimum \$150,209,612.49. The current calculations have also included additional costs to fund the Afterschool Snack Program, which although not indicated in this legislation, the SFSB participates in and receives federal reimbursement for.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Susan L.K. Lee Loy
Council Member
District 3



Office: (808) 961-8396
Fax: (808) 961-8912
Email: sue.leeloy@hawaiicounty.gov

HAWAI‘I COUNTY COUNCIL

25 Aupuni Street, Hilo, Hawai‘i 96720

February 21 , 2024

The Honorable Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

Hawai‘i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Support for HB 1775, HD1 Relating to Education

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

Mahalo for the opportunity to express support for House Bill No. 1775, HD1. This bill is an equitable approach to addressing poverty and food insecurity in our schools..High food costs are a significant barrier to food security and universal free school meals makes it possible to ensure every child has access to a nutritious and balanced meal while in school, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Currently, 2 out of 3 struggling families are ineligible for free school meals, and the cost of school meals can be a barrier to accessing nutritious meals. Universal free school meals can alleviate the financial burden on families and promote a healthier, more equitable educational environment.

HB 1775, HD1 reflects our local community’s recognition of the urgency to address the issue of food security and is a positive step towards protecting the public – especially our most vulnerable families in need. We stand ready to support better physical health and increase students’ ability to concentrate, learn, and thrive academically.

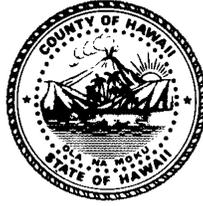
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan L.K. Lee Loy".

Susan “Sue” L.K. Lee Loy
Council Member, County of Hawai‘i

Hawai‘i County Is an Equal Opportunity Provider And Employer

Jennifer Kagiwada
Council Member District 2 South Hilo



Office: (808) 961-8272
jennifer.kagiwada@hawaiicounty.gov

HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

DATE: February 21, 2024
TO: House Committee on Finance
FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member
Council District 2
SUBJECT: HB 1775

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members,

I am testifying in support of HB 1775 to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in DOE schools. This program would begin with the 2024-2025 school year, and would require the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai'i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai'i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenn Kagiwada'.

Jenn Kagiwada



IATSE LOCAL 665

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INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THEATRICAL STAGE EMPLOYEES, MOVING PICTURE TECHNICIANS, ARTISTS AND ALLIED CRAFTS
OF THE UNITED STATES, ITS TERRITORIES AND CANADA, AFL-CIO, CLC

Thirty-Second Legislature, State of Hawai'i
Regular Session of 2024
House Committee on Finance

Testimony by IATSE 665
February 23rd, 2024

H.B. 1775 H.D.1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the House Committee,

My name is Tuia'ana Scanlan, International Trustee and president of IATSE Local 665, the union representing technicians in the entertainment industry in Hawai'i. **Local 665 strongly supports HB 1775 HD1**, relating to education.

A 2022 study by Aloha United Way found that 44% of Hawai'i's households are below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold. 54% of Hawai'i households with children are below this threshold as well. The report "reflects a significant increase in local households who slipped from ALICE into poverty [...] especially affecting Hawaiian and Pacific Islander households, female-led households, and households with children" (https://www.hawaiihealthmatters.org/content/sites/hawaii/ALICE_in_Hawaii_-_2022_Facts_and_Figures_Full_Report.pdf)

A majority of households in the state of Hawai'i with children are barely making ends meet, even though the head(s) of the household is/are employed. HB 1775 HD1 will significantly relieve a portion of the economic burden that working families in Hawai'i are struggling to shoulder. The last thing that a child should have to worry about is whether or not they're going to have enough to eat today. HB 1775 HD1 will not only increase the quality of life for these children, it will increase both proficiency and growth metrics for these students because a child who no longer needs to focus on survival can repurpose that energy toward thriving.

IATSE 665 asks for your committee's support of HB 1775 HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tuia'ana Scanlan'.

Tuia'ana Scanlan
International Trustee
President, IATSE 665 (he/him/his)



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1775 HD1: RELATING TO EDUCATION

TO: House Committee on Finance

FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: **Friday, 2/23/24; 1:00 pm; via Videoconference or Room 308**

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members, Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in Support of HB 1775, HD1**, which would provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in public schools. I am Rob Van Tassell with Catholic Charities Hawaii. **This bill could be life changing for many working families in Hawaii.**

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy to the most vulnerable of the people in Hawaii.

CCH participates with the Aloha United Way in an initiative to bring help and hope to the ALICE population. The struggling ALICE families have been hit by both rising rents and rising food costs. They are not alone. Many low and moderate income families struggle to feed their kids nutritious meals. **Can you imagine the stress of trying to feed your family with a refrigerator that's often bare?**

Food is a basic human necessity. Kids need it to grow strong and healthy and to learn in school. This bill would be a godsend to families. It would relieve stress from families for breakfast and lunch while their children are in school. It would also remove the stigma from keiki who already qualify for free meals. It promotes equity and justice. For Hawaii to be strong, we must ensure the well-being and academic success of all our keiki.

Thousands of kamaaina families are leaving the State to seek more affordable living. We are losing our workforce and the keiki who are our future. We must provide hope to families considering moving out of state.

Hawaii must expand the safety net for food. This bill would provide daily breakfast and lunch, building upon the existing school lunch program. What a relief to so many families.

Take action now! Help our workforce to remain in Hawaii, and give hope for a better and healthier life for their children. If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson at (808) 527-4813.



HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 2:49:03 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Redfeather	Ka Ohana O Na Pua	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

There are still problems with students not getting lunch, so this would certainly solve that. Also it would increase the importance of development of the Hawaii Farm to School Program for all students. Purchasing local would definitely increase a farm's profitability, and we know that if farmers make a profit, they will continue and expand their farming operations! Mahalo.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:11:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Richard	Hawai'i Cigar	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in **strong support of HB 1775, HD1.**

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai'i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai'i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration,

Richard Bodien

Hawai'i Cigar

Hawi

To: House Committee on Finance
Re: **HB 1775 HD1 – Relating to Education**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 23, 2024, 1:00 PM

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB 1775 HD1**. This bill, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools and appropriates funds.

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. 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.

Many families that have to pay 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,¹ while the "bare-minimum costs of basic necessities" for that same family is more than \$100,000.² 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.³ Schools benefit from reduced administrative burdens because they no longer need to collect meal payments. Students see better academic performance and nutrition. Currently 92 DOE schools and 14 charter schools already provide universal free meals,⁴ and during the pandemic all schools provided free meals, thanks to federal COVID funding.

If this program were to provide **free breakfast and lunch to all students**, and there was no increase in meal participation, we estimate it would cost about **\$19.2 million per year**. We based our calculations on the free, reduced-price and paid student participation in school meals in Hawai'i during the 2018-19 school year⁵ and the current school meal prices.

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.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/FreeReducedLunch.aspx>

² <https://www.auw.org/sites/default/files/pictures/ALICE%20in%20Hawaii%20-%202022%20Facts%20and%20Figures%20Full%20Report.pdf>

³ <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20220504.114330/>

⁴ <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/CEP.aspx>

⁵ <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/SchoolMealsReport2022.pdf>



**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Friday, February 23, 2024; 1:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 1775, HOUSE DRAFT 1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, 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. 1775, House Draft 1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

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:

- (1) Require free school breakfast and lunch to every student enrolled in a public school, regardless of a student's eligibility for participation in the federal school breakfast or lunch program; and
- (2) Appropriate an unspecified amount of general funds for fiscal year 2024-2025 to provide for universal free school breakfasts and lunches after federal funding is accounted.

This measure would take effect on July 1, 3000.

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

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@hawaiiPCA.net.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:41:19 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Fox	Malama Kaua‘i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Feeding all of our children school meals and using state funds to bring in further Federal funding to do so is important. Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1. Thank you for your consideration



February 21, 2024

To: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Re: SUPPORT of HB1775 HD1 - Relating to Education

Hrg: February 23, 2024, 1:00 PM

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 450 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. Our mission is to promote public health in Hawai'i through leadership, collaboration, education and advocacy. Additionally, HPHA aims to call attention to issues around social justice and equity in areas that extend beyond the traditional context of health (e.g., education, digital equity, cultural sensitivity), which can have profound impacts on health equity and well-being. Therefore, as stewards of public health, HPHA is also advocating for equity in all policies.

HPHA supports HB 1775 HD1 as the bill aims to provide universal free school meals ensure that every child has access to a nutritious and balanced meal while in school, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Currently, 2 out of 3 struggling families are ineligible for free school meals, and the cost of school meals can be a barrier to accessing nutritious meals. Universal free school meals can alleviate the financial burden on families and promote a healthier, more equitable educational environment. This initiative contributes to better physical health and increases students' ability to concentrate, learn, and thrive academically.

HPHA strongly supports HB 1775 HD1 and respectfully asks that you pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important public health issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Kessler
Executive Director



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 Thompson
Secretary-Treasurer

Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Item: **HB1775 HD1 - Relating to education**
Position: **Support**
Hearing: **February 23, 2024, 1:00 p.m., Conference Room 308**
Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** HB1775 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools.

One of the things teachers tell their students in advance of testing days is to be sure to have a good breakfast. When students are hungry, it affects their performance in school. As grocery prices for families continue to rise, food insecurity rises as well. Too often, students who want to eat are denied a meal by no fault of their own as they find themselves in circumstances that they never wanted to be in. Ensuring that all students who go to their school cafeterias can receive a breakfast and lunch is important to allow them to keep their thoughts on their studies and not on hunger.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

FEBRUARY 23, 2024

HB 1775, HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawaii **supports** HB 1775, HD1, relating to education. Pursuant to the “Education” section of the Democratic Party of Hawaii platform, the party supports “an excellent, free public education for students at every level.”

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.”

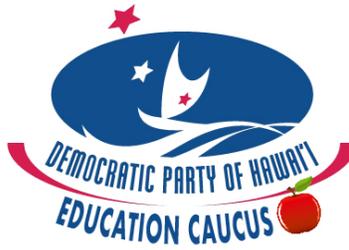
Notably, school meals cost less per student when more students participate in a free meal program. An article entitled in *Nutrients* entitled “Universal Free Meals Associated with Lower Meal Costs While Maintaining Nutritional Quality” found that **schools that participated in a universal meal program 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.

Mahalo nui loa,

Kris Coffield
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 679-7454
kriscoffield@gmail.com

Abby Simmons
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 352-6818
abbyalana808@gmail.com



HOUSE BILL 1775, HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 23, 2024 · FIN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1775, HD1, relating to education, which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools.

Hungry children can't learn.

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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



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

February 22, 2024

Subject: *HB1775 - Relating to Education*

Aloha Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Lisa Kitagawa, and the House Committee of Finance,

Mahalo distinguished legislators for taking the time to review this testimony being submitted **IN SUPPORT** of **HB1775** which would require the Department of Education to provide a free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools beginning the 2024-2025 school year.

With many still recovering from the economic impacts of COVID-19 shutdowns and the increase in the price of basic essentials on the rise, the need to ensure our children are well nourished and prepared to be successful is more important than ever. With food and housing insecurity on the rise, 2 of 3 households struggle to make ends meet, we need to ensure that our keiki are given inclusivity and economic justice at our learning institutions to enforce positive outcomes for their feeling of belonging and worth in society. Making sure children get access to educational tools to become community contributors will be enhanced when they can congregate with their peers during mealtime without stigma. The current issues with school meal applications such as language barriers, income verification, or fears surrounding personal information disclosures as well as federal poverty threshold limits prevent families in need from obtaining meals for their kids.

Hawaii is one of the few states that allow schools to deny food to kids with negative accounts. We must also consider how the keiki who are denied a meal due to their negative balance must feel knowing that already prepared food gets thrown away. It is not only wasteful but adds additional costs for disposal. It would seem that the school system would rather dump perfectly good food than give it to a hungry student. Imagine instead of having distracted, disruptive, and disheartened young minds who could eventually go to stealing food before or after school, we have engaged, encouraged, and excited pupils who feel valued and loved.

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2024, the cohort of interns are undergrads and graduate students from throughout the UH System. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

Which version would be more thankful to be in school, more willing to participate, and likely to remember that their experience was better because we put their well-being first? Other states have embraced this and we can join them as leaders in our nation. We can enforce aloha throughout their educational career and give the families the care they deserve.

We urge the committee to pass HB1775. We thank Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Lisa Kitagawa, and the House Committee of Finance for considering the comments herein.

Mahalo,
Janine Mariano & Hawaii Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

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HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 4:52:25 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan B Roberts Emery	Green Party of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Green Party of Hawai'i, I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

Proper nutrition for our Keiki is important to our families. Please vote Yes on HB1775,HD1.

Mahalo,

Susan RobertsEmery

Co chair GPH



AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

OFFICERS

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

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Juliet Begley
Stephanie Fitzpatrick
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DIRECTORS

Jan Lubin
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Bill South

MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 23404
Honolulu HI
968233

February 21, 2024

TO: Chair Yamashita and Members of the FIN Committee

RE: HB 1775 HD1 Relating to Education

Support for a Hearing on February 23

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.

Americans for Democratic Action Hawaii supports this bill as it would provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in DOE schools. We believe that providing nutritious meals to all students, regardless of the economic circumstances, is an important step to ensuring the well-being and academic success of all of our young people. It would help reduce food insecurity and reduce the stigma of getting a free meal as it would go to all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Bickel, President



2024 Network Members

City and County of Honolulu
County of Hawai'i
Hawai'i Appleseed
Hawai'i Children's Action
Network
Hawai'i Department of
Agriculture
Hawai'i Food Bank
Hawai'i Good Food Alliance
Hawai'i Public Health Institute
Kōkua Kalihi Valley
Comprehensive Health Center
Lanakila Pacific
Mālama Kaua'i
Maui Nui Food Alliance
Parents and Children Together
Supersistence
The Food Basket Inc., Hawai'i
Island's Food Bank
The Pantry, by Feeding Hawai'i
Together
UH Center for Indigenous
Innovation/ Health Equity
Wai'anae Coast
Comprehensive Health Center

Hawaiihungeraction.org

House Committee on Finance

February 23, 2024 at 1:00PM

RE: Support for HB 1775, Relating to Education

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i Hunger Action Network, a coalition of more than twenty local organizations with the mission to advocate for food security for Hawai'i households, appreciates the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of HB 1775**. This bill would require the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all public school students in the state of Hawai'i.

During the pandemic, the federal government took great strides to stem alarming spikes in child hunger by granting free school meals to all children. The waiver authorizing free school meals for all students expired in June 2022, meaning families are again being required to pay for school meals.

Eligibility thresholds for free school meals require that a family of four makes under \$44,850 per year, putting this benefit out of reach for Hawai'i's Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families. That's two out of three struggling families that have to pay for school meals, which can cost up to \$110 per child per month. ***This means that the same family of four making over the ~\$45K eligibility threshold could end up paying \$2,200 per year.***

More and more children are falling through the cracks, and our network members are seeing and feeling the impacts first-hand. The demand for food assistance across the state continues to overwhelm our emergency food networks on a day to day basis. The number of schools offering school pantries is climbing year over year, and

teachers are being forced to use money from their own personal budgets to stock “snack drawers” for children who show up to school without eating, or who are overdrawn in their school food accounts. They know that their students are hungry, and have no choice but to provide some kind of nourishment if they want them to succeed in school.

The impacts are not isolated to the emergency food system—they are being felt by the state as well. ***The Hawai'i DOE has been reporting record meal debt in recent years—more than 2.5 times the rate seen in pre-pandemic times—because many parents simply can't afford the fees.*** And sadly, it's our children who are ultimately paying the price; as little as a \$5 meal debt can result in a child being denied a meal at school, putting them at risk of going hungry and making it harder to learn.

Passing this bill would be an investment that would have an enormous impact. ***Our network members estimate the cost of this program at around \$25 million a year—about one percent of the DOE's annual budget.***¹ It would also put Hawai'i at the forefront of a national movement to make sure no child goes hungry. So far, eight states have passed similar legislation, and dozens more are expected to follow suit in coming years.

Providing school breakfast and lunch without charge to ALL public school families—regardless of income—is a crucial strategy to guarantee that every child receives the necessary nutrition for growth and well-being. Mahalo for your consideration of this bill.

¹ [Hawai'i Appleseed \(2024\). Equity on the Menu: The Case for Universal Free School Meals](#)



HIPHI Board

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University of Hawai'i at Hilo

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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 Hui

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 22, 2024

To: Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

Re: HB 1775 Relating to Education

Hrg: Friday, February 23, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Instituteⁱ appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **Strong Support of HB1775**, which would provide students at DOE public schools with free school meals.

Access to education and food.

All students, regardless of income, are given the opportunity to attend school. Everyone has access to free public education, it is not just provided to those who can least afford it. 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 because families miss or cannot afford lunch payments, or a family must budget away from other areas of like housing or healthcare to pay for lunch. 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 \$45,000 per year, which is more than 50% less than the \$104,000 that is needed to make ends meet in Hawai'i, are not eligible for free school meals.ⁱⁱⁱ These Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (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.

Improving learning.

When New York City adopted universal free school meals test scores improved 15% above what they were before the program was implemented.^v This significant boost is one of the best academic interventions available. Compared to the cost of roughly 1% of the DOE budget, free school meals would provide a 15:1 return on investment. In addition to helping hungry students get fed, this program will also improve the performance of the DOE itself.

Proven success.

The Hawai'i Department of Education successfully ran a free school meals program for two full calendar years. Students received free school meals for both the 2020-2021 school year and the 2021-2022 school year. The only difference between then and now who is financially responsible for payments. Hawai'i would take the place of the federal government.

In 2018-2019, there were 32,352 breakfasts and 100,234 lunches served daily in Hawai'i by schools participating in the national school lunch program.^{vi} In the 2021-2022 school year there were a total of 27,721 breakfasts and 92,687 lunches served.^{vii} This comparison shows there was not an increase in meal participation as meals became free, instead there was a shift in which students were participating. Based on that information, we don't anticipate there will be a need for the DOE to hire additional staff or to purchase additional equipment to implement this program.

Students go without food because of a variety of circumstances, and they need to be fed in order to learn. Nutrition helps overall health, and eating allows students to concentrate on school, not on their hungry stomachs. This concept is so well supported that eight states and New York City Schools all provide free meals.^{viii} Every child should know that when in school, they will eat.

Thank you for considering this important bill, and our testimony in strong support of HB1775. Please pass this measure.

Sincerely,



Nate Hix
Social Impact Policy Manager
Hawai'i Public Health Insititute

ⁱ 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.

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

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://unitedforalice.org/hawaii>

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

^v <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2019/10/15/21121847/universal-free-lunch-is-linked-to-better-test-scores-in-new-york-city-new-report-finds/>

^{vi} <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/SchoolMealsReport2022.pdf>

^{vii} <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/school-meals-2023.pdf>

^{viii} <https://apnews.com/article/free-school-meals-0c927f491b2ee9d4ce7e04b44da79e51>



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for H.B. 1775 – Relating to Education
House Committee on Finance
Friday, February 23, 2024, at 1:00PM

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair La Kitagawa, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **H.B. 1775**, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education to provide a free, nutritious breakfast and lunch to all public school students, regardless of their ability to pay.

School meals are one of the government’s most powerful tools for delivering keiki good nutrition
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 eat in a day.

Universal free school meals are a lifeline to Hawai‘i’s struggling families

Federal eligibility for free or reduced price meals requires that households earn below 130% or 185% of the federal poverty level (\$44,850 or \$63,825, respectively, annually for a family of four in 2024). However, Hawai‘i’s costs of living require that a family with two adults and two children make at least \$104,000 to simply survive.² This leaves Hawai‘i’s Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families making slightly above the poverty line ineligible for assistance yet unable to make ends meet.

A universal free school meals programs is efficient and effective

Universal free school meals (UFSM) augments the traditional income-based eligibility system and removes known barriers to participation including economic, administrative, language, and social challenges. UFSM is a proven strategy to reduce childhood food insecurity and improve the overall well-being and academic performance of children. A 2022 study of schools implementing UFSM found an almost 5% decline in households classified as food insecure.³

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **H.B. 1775**. As shown in the attached one pager, eight states have chosen to make this worthwhile investment in their keiki. Across the country, UFSM has been implemented successfully through the intentional blending of policies and funding mechanisms at the federal, state, and local levels. While our cost estimate differs from the Department of Education we are working collaboratively to understand each other’s methodology and determine the true cost of a UFSM program. We are pleased that the Hawai‘i legislature is paying attention to this important issue because hungry keiki cannot learn. Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

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

² Aloha United Way. ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Hawai‘i (2023)

³ Journal of Health Economics. “The Effect of Free School Meals on Household Food Purchases” (2022)

<u>States with UFSM</u>	<u>Starting School Year</u>	<u>Funding Mechanism</u>
California	2022-2023	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation
Colorado	2023-2024	Voter-passed tax measure that reduces income tax deductions available to households earning \$300,000 or more
Maine	2022-2023	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation
Massachusetts	2023-2024	Voter-approved 4% tax on incomes over \$1M
Michigan	2023-2024	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation
Minnesota	2023-2024	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation
New Mexico	2023-2024	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation
Vermont	2023-2024	General Funds/Education Fund Appropriation via a \$.003 increase in the property tax rate



February 22, 2024

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Brandt Farias

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Our Mission:
"To be a relentless force for a
world of longer,
healthier lives."

For more information on the
AHA's educational or research
programs, visit www.heart.org
or contact your nearest AHA
office.

Rep. Kyle Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

American Heart Association Testimony for HB 1775 "Relating to Education"

The American Heart Association (AHA) is pleased to support HB 1775. This bill will provide students at public schools with two free meals a day.

The AHA, along with other health and food security partners, have long advocated to improve the school meals program. This includes making the program accessible to all students as well as improving school meal nutrition standards.

For many families, the cost of school meals can be a barrier to accessing the balanced diet their children need. Universal free school meals can provide meals to students who may otherwise not eat at all.

Universal school meals:

- 1) Recognize that meals are just as important as textbooks for a student's academic success.
- 2) Remove stigma and increase participation among students who are already eligible for subsidized meals.
- 3) Helps students increase their nutritional intake.
- 4) Reduce students' experiences with food and nutrition insecurity.
- 5) Relieve the administrative burden on school districts and families.

- 6) Help students who fall through the cracks and don't qualify because of Hawaii's high cost of living.

Many of our students and families are struggling and at risk of falling through the cracks. When students are hungry, they aren't ready to learn. Students who participate in school meals, particularly those who are experiencing food insecurity, have better health outcomes, have improved test scores, and are better able to concentrate in school. It is for these and the above-mentioned reasons, the American Heart Association urges your support of HB 1775.

Sincerely,



Jamie Morgan
Sr. Region Lead, State Government Relations



HAWAI`I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 904

Honolulu, Hawai`i 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: info@hysn.org

Vonnell Ramos, President
Cyd Hoffeld, Vice President
Sione Ford Naeata, Treasurer
Greg Tjapkes, Secretary

Judith F. Clark, Executive
Director

Network Membership

*Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai`i
Big Island Substance Abuse
Council*

*Bobby Benson Center
Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai`i
Collins Consulting, LLC
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC `Ohana, Inc.*

*Family Programs Hawai`i
Family Support Hawai`i
Friends of the Children's Justice
Center of Maui*

*Get Ready Hawai`i
Hale Kipa, Inc.
Hale `Opio Kaua`i, Inc.
Hawai`i Children's Action
Network*

*Hawai`i Health & Harm
Reduction Center
Hawaii Island Community'
Health Center*

*Ho`ola Na Pua
Ho`okele Coalition of Kaua`i
Ka Hale Pomaika`i*

*Kahi Mohala
Kokua Kalih Valley
Kaua`i Planning and Action
Alliance*

*Maui Youth and Family Services
Na Pu`uwai Molokai Native
Hawaiian Health Care
Systems*

*P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
Parents and Children Together
PHOCUSED*

*PFLAG - Kona, Big Island
Planned Parenthood of the
Great Northwest, Hawaii
Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana*

*Residential Youth Services
& Empowerment (RYSE)*

*Salvation Army Family
Intervention Services*

*Sex Abuse Treatment Center
Susannah Wesley Community
Center*

The Catalyst Group

February 22, 2024

Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
And members of the Committee on Finance

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1775 HD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN) strongly supports HB 1775 HD1
Relating to Education.

Children who are hungry cannot learn and do not thrive. Due to the high
cost of living in Hawaii, many families who do not meet federal guidelines
are experiencing food insecurity. Free school meals will ensure that no
public school student goes hungry.

In addition, if all students are receiving free meals, there will be no stigma
attached to participation in the program.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Judith F. Clark'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Judith F. Clark
Executive Director

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 11:59:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deb Nehmad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong **support of HB1775** to implement universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. I believe that providing nutritious meals to all students, regardless of the economic circumstances, is an important step to ensuring the well-being and academic success of all of our keiki.

Universal free school meal programs help reduce food insecurity, promote equity and justice, improve academic success, and eliminate stigma.

A universal free school meals program in Hawai‘i is estimated to cost \$25.5 million—only about 1 percent of the DOE’s operating budget. On the other hand, jurisdictions that offer universal free school meals see a 15 percent increase in academic performance *annually*. That's a small investment for such a big impact.

I urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. By doing so, we have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health, well-being, and future of our keiki and Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for this opportunity

deb Nehmad

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 12:01:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1775 to implement universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. I believe that providing nutritious meals to all students, regardless of the economic circumstances, is an important step to ensuring the well-being and academic success of all of our keiki.

Universal free school meal programs help reduce food insecurity, promote equity and justice, improve academic success, and eliminate stigma.

A universal free school meals program in Hawai‘i is estimated to cost \$25.5 million—only about 1 percent of the DOE’s operating budget. On the other hand, jurisdictions that offer universal free school meals see a 15 percent increase in academic performance *annually*. That's a small investment for such a big impact.

I urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. By doing so, we have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health, well-being, and future of our keiki and Hawai‘i.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 12:11:07 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1775 to implement universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. I believe that providing nutritious meals to all students, regardless of the economic circumstances, is an important step to ensuring the well-being and academic success of all of our keiki.

Universal free school meal programs help reduce food insecurity, promote equity and justice, improve academic success, and eliminate stigma.

A universal free school meals program in Hawai‘i is estimated to cost \$25.5 million—only about 1 percent of the DOE’s operating budget. On the other hand, jurisdictions that offer universal free school meals see a 15 percent increase in academic performance annually. That's a small investment for such a big impact.

I urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. By doing so, we have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health, well-being, and future of our keiki and Hawai‘i.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 12:12:33 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Danielle Beaver	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1775 to implement universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. I believe that providing nutritious meals to all students, regardless of the economic circumstances, is an important step to ensuring the well-being and academic success of all of our keiki.

Universal free school meal programs help reduce food insecurity, promote equity and justice, improve academic success, and eliminate stigma.

A universal free school meals program in Hawai‘i is estimated to cost \$25.5 million—only about 1 percent of the DOE’s operating budget. On the other hand, jurisdictions that offer universal free school meals see a 15 percent increase in academic performance *annually*. That's a small investment for such a big impact.

I urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. By doing so, we have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health, well-being, and future of our keiki and Hawai‘i.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 12:36:37 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristin Mills	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of HB1775, the Universal Free School Meals Bill.

No child should go hungry, but two out of three struggling families are not eligible for free school meals. This bill would ensure that anybody can eat for free and our hungry keiki would not be forced to skip meals.

Academically, we want our youth to succeed. But hungry students simply cannot focus on learning. Free school meal programs have shown to work. When universal free school meals have been implemented elsewhere, student test scores rose the equivalent of 6 additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes.

In terms of health outcomes, hungry students are at much higher risks for stress, depression and chronic disease. Investing in nutritious food for our keiki will result in lifelong benefits to their health.

Please support HB1775 so our keiki can be fed and nourished and set up to succeed health-wise and academically.

Sincerely,

Kristin Mills

Maui resident, parent, and health educator

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 12:39:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pua Auyong-White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Members of the committee:

I am writing in strong support of HB1775 to implement universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. I believe that providing nutritious meals to all students, regardless of the economic circumstances, is an important step to ensuring the well-being and academic success of all of our keiki.

Universal free school meal programs help reduce food insecurity, promote equity and justice, improve academic success, and eliminate stigma.

A universal free school meals program in Hawai‘i is estimated to cost \$25.5 million—only about 1 percent of the DOE’s operating budget. On the other hand, jurisdictions that offer universal free school meals see a 15 percent increase in academic performance *annually*. That's a small investment for such a big impact.

I urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. By doing so, we have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health, well-being, and future of our keiki and Hawai‘i.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 12:41:05 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in STRONG SUPPORT of HB1775 HD1.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for Universal Free School Meals (HB1775). As a member of this community, I firmly believe that every child deserves access to nutritious meals, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Ensuring that children have access to healthy meals at school is not only a matter of basic human rights but also a fundamental necessity for their physical and cognitive development. Numerous studies have shown that adequate nutrition is directly linked to improved academic performance, better overall health, and enhanced cognitive function. By providing free school meals, we are not only addressing immediate hunger but also investing in the future well-being of our children and our society as a whole.

Moreover, free school meals help to alleviate the financial burden on families who may be struggling to make ends meet. In many households, providing regular, nutritious meals can be a significant challenge, and free school meals serve as a crucial support system for those in need. By removing the barrier of cost, we ensure that all students have equal opportunities to thrive academically and socially, regardless of their economic circumstances.

Furthermore, free school meals foster a sense of inclusivity and equality within our schools. They help to break down barriers and reduce the stigma associated with poverty. When all students are provided with the same nutritious meals, regardless of their background, it promotes a sense of unity and solidarity among students, fostering a more supportive and compassionate school environment.

In addition to the immediate benefits for students and families, investing in free school meals also yields long-term benefits for our society as a whole. By ensuring that our children are well-nourished and equipped to succeed, we are laying the foundation for a healthier, more prosperous future. Healthy, well-nourished children are more likely to grow into productive, contributing members of society, reducing healthcare costs, improving economic productivity, and strengthening our communities in the process.

In conclusion, I urge you to support HB1775. By doing so, we demonstrate our commitment to the well-being and success of our children, our communities, and our nation as a whole. Together, let us ensure that no child goes hungry and that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Butel".

Jean Butel

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 12:51:57 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jodi Robinson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill to provide universal free meals to Hawai'i's students. As someone who went to public school on Kaua'i and O'ahu, I know how valuable my school's lunch service was for my family and my classmates--many who were on free or reduced lunch and relied on school meals daily. Free school meals would cost 1% of the DOE budget, and is proven to increase test scores and improve our public education system. It is a common sense measure that we should prioritize for our keiki. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 12:52:19 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Kim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Members of the committee,

I strongly support HB1775 to provide free lunch to all public school students in the state of Hawaii.

- No Child Should Go Hungry – 2 out of 3 struggling families are not eligible for free school meals. This bill would ensure that anybody can eat for free and our hungry keiki would not be forced to skip meals.
- No child would have the stigma of having to return a meal because of no money in their school food account.
- Hungry students cannot focus on learning. All children deserve to be fed during the school day, so that they are ready to learn.
- Increased Academic Performance – When universal free school meals has been implemented elsewhere, student test scores rose the equivalent of 6 additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes.
- Improved Health Outcomes – Hungry students are at much higher risks for stress, depression and chronic disease. Investing in nutritious food for our keiki will result in lifelong benefits to their health. Please vote to support this bill!!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:05:27 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bernadette Kaleinani Tom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If you value the continued positive existence of the future State of Hawai'i, then please vote your conscience to push the bill to allow all students, no matter what grade they are in, to grant each and every student the ability to have meals free of charge, especially when their school cards are empty or for whatever reasons their cards are empty. Having regular meals will allow all students to thrive in their environment and it would also allow students to avoid the stigma that bullying does to some meeker students who attend school just because they love being in school to learn. Help them make a difference by being their voices when no one else is. Help them survive and thrive in their love of learning. And remember that some of you were once these same children that I am fighting this bill. Thank you

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:10:08 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul Bernstein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members,

I'm writing in support of HB1775. Many families struggle to make ends meet in Hawai'i and don't qualify for free school meals. These students often go hungry throughout the day which hurts their academic performance and health. Providing free school meals is a great way to improve the educational experience and well-being of our keiki. Offering meals to all students will help keep students in school, and there are clearly societal benefits of this outcome ranging from lower crime and better educated pool of workers.

Please pass HB1775 out of your committee for the benefit of our entire community.

Mahalo,

Paul Bernstein

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:14:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Winternitz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Elizabeth Winternitz and I live in Kula Maui. Please support this important bill. Universal free school meals ensure that every child has access to a nutritious and balanced meal while in school, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Currently, 2 out of 3 struggling families are ineligible for free school meals, and the cost of school meals can be a barrier to accessing nutritious meals. Universal free school meals can alleviate the financial burden on families and promote a healthier, more equitable educational environment.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:15:34 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charles Schenk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Kyle Yahashita, Co Chair Lisa Kitagawa,

I am in support of this bill (HB1775). I believe that as a student of Castle High School lunch is important to our achademic progress. The result of students not eating lunch (due to not being able to afford it or they don't like the taste) leads to overall sluggish attitudes, an non-participating views. If the lunches were more affordable or free for evereyone, student participation would go up and sluggishness go down. Which all would improve our achademic progress.

Mahalo,

Charles Schenk

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:16:30 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ariana Royal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because the DOE should be able/required to use the money they are already given by the state to pay for students' lunches in order to make them free. It has been argued that the DOE is already given a substantial amount of money and that giving more money to the DOE would be unfair to the other departments. However, there is no need for the DOE to get more money than they are already receiving from the state because if this bill were to pass, it would only take up 1% of their budget to pay for the school meals.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:21:53 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jamie Sarmiento	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Yamatisha and Vice Chair Kitagawa

I support HB1775 due to the idea on how could the Hawaii DOE Superintendent got paid \$240,000 a year while some kids in school's are starving and not getting any foods because of financial problems. DOE could prioritize spending their money on important things like students. I am in support in this bill because I am one of those students who doesn't get free and reduce meals. It has been a struggle for me to put money in my meal account because of my other expenses and needs. Paying for my own meal is my way in helping my parents financially and not all students has this kind of ability especially when parent's are struggling too.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:22:41 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Antonia Papica	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

This bill will help many struggling families like my own ensure their children receive a healthy lunch at school daily. With the cost of living in Hawaii, we struggle to make ends meet yet we are over the income threshold for discounted lunches by only 50 dollars per month, but there is no leeway for this threshold even though we can not afford to buy school lunches for all our children, And every year the cost of school lunch increases. We send them to school with home lunches but they are not always healthy or well balanced, we are often scrambling in the mornings to think of what we can pack for them that doesn't need refrigeration or heating.

Having a free or widely available discounted lunches will take a lot of pressure off parents to provide their own school lunches or struggle to afford school lunches.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:28:46 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nellieshy mamuad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

i fully support HB 1775 to provide free eals to all children in public schools. my children have had to pay full prices for all meals for the past few years and only during the pandmic were we able to recieve free meals. although many schools fall within the poverty percentage for free meals, my children do not attend one of those schools and each week is approx \$30-40 for their school meals. inmates in our public jails/prisons eat for free, so should our kids.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:31:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
dylan molena ayers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita & Vice Chair Kitagawa,
I support HB1775 because I do not qualify for Free or Reduced meals, and my parents cannot afford to always put money on my account. They have a mortgage, electric bill, water bill, car payments, car insurance/registration bills, gas, food, children's needs, and much more. On days I don't eat, I feel tired and slower than normal than when I do eat. Please pass this bill because I'm STARVING!

Mahalo

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:32:14 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patti Hatzistavrakis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Patti Hatzistavrakis, fully support 1775 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION. I believe no child should go hungry. Two of three struggling families are not eligible for free school meals. This bill would ensure that every child can eat for free and not be forced to skip meals and be hungry throughout the school day. Hungry students cannot focus on learning. When universal free school meals were implemented elsewhere, student test scores rose the equivalent of 6 additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes. In addition to improved academic performance, investing in nutritious food for our keiki will result in lifelong benefits to their health.

As the future leaders of our communities, our children deserve the opportunity to develop healthy habits and thrive academically and physically. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of 1775 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION. I appreciate the committee's consideration.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:48:50 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chassi Mulliken	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HB1775 as my husband and I earn just a bit too much to qualify for free or reduced school meals for our 7 year old son. My son attends a CEP school, so he has been receiving free lunch via this route. We are very grateful for this because we do not qualify for any other type of assistance, and free school meals makes a drastic impact on our finances. We save about \$60/month because our child receives free meals. With this extra funds we are able to put it towards groceries as we do not qualify for SNAP.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:49:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Nelson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Finance Committee Members,

I would like to provide my strong support for HB1775 Relating to Education. In order to have a healthy and thriving future generation, we as a State must make efforts to ensure that no child go hungry. Universal free school meals are one of the only mechanisms we have at our disposal to provide food access to every public school child in Hawai'i.

This bill would ensure that anybody can eat for free and our hungry keiki would not be forced to skip meals. No child would have the stigma of having to return a meal because of no money in their school food account. If you have ever skipped a meal, you know the discomfort and how difficult it is to concentrate. Universal free school meals provides dignity and needed sustenance to our keiki to ensure that our future generations can focus on learning.

When universal free school meals has been implemented elsewhere, student test scores rose the equivalent of 6 additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes. Additionally, hungry students are at much higher risks for stress, depression and chronic disease.

Investing in nutritious food for our keiki will result in lifelong benefits to their health. Please invest in the health and success of our future generation - please support HB1775 Relating to Education to support Universal Free School Meals.

Mahalo,

Lauren Nelson

Makawao, HI

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:58:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
HOLLAND HENDERSON	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a high school teacher. Every day, my students complain of being hungry. They literally beg for food. At lunch time, they sit in my room with no food because they don't have money in their account. Please pass this bill.

Date: February 21, 2024

To: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

Re: **Support for HB 1775 HD1**, Relating to Education

Hrg: Friday February 23, 2024 at 1:00 pm via Videoconference Conference Room 308

Aloha House Committee on Finance,

As a parent, community member and healthcare professional I am writing in **strong support of HB 1775 HD1**, which beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools; and, appropriates funds.

In Hawai'i, 2-out-of-3 struggling families are not eligible for free school meals. This bill would ensure that every child can eat for free and our hungry keiki would not be forced to skip meals.

This bill ensures that no child would have the stigma of having to return a meal because of no money in their school food account.

Hungry students cannot focus on learning. All children deserve to eat during the school day, so that they are ready to learn.

In schools elsewhere that have implemented universal free school meals, student test scores rose the equivalent of six (6) additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes.

Hungry students are at much higher risks for stress, depression and chronic disease. Investing in nutritious food for our keiki will result in lifelong benefits to their health.

I **strongly support HB 1775 HD1**, respectfully ask you to pass it out of committee.

Many thanks for your consideration,

Forrest Batz, PharmD
Keaau, HI

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 2:25:18 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joella Speelman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am submitting testimony in support of HB1775 to ensure that all keiki in public school receive free meals at school. No child should have to go hungry due to circumstances beyond their control. Our keiki deserve to be well fed and educated for free in the state of Hawaii.

Mahalo Nui Loa,

Joella Speelman

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 2:27:08 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Richard Collins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support this bill. Please pass it out of conference for the health of all keiki in Hawaii.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 2:47:24 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malae Tini	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a senior at Castle High School and in support of HB1775 because some kids don't qualify for free and reduced lunch even though their parents are making just enough to survive and provide for their family. All students deserve to have access to food while in school to help them stay energized. Can you please pass this bill so all kids in the state of Hawai'i can eat school meals for free!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:04:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONGLY SUPPORT!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:18:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
megan powers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

I support HB1175 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Not being hungry enables kids to focus. It is also important that the school lunches and breakfasts be very nutritious, made with lots of fresh local food and not be loaded with sugar, white processed flour and food additives. If you care for our keiki, give them real food.

Please support HB 1775, HD.

Thank you for your consideration,

Megan Powers, Haiku, Maui

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:19:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marilyn Mick	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration,

Marilyn Mick, Honolulu

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:23:16 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kerestin Walker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration,

Keke Walker, Honolulu

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:36:28 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bruce Mirken	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Some public policy issues are complex. This one isn't. All children need adequate nutrition to grow and develop and be able to learn. We know that too many kids in Hawaii can't always get sufficient nutritious meals at home. School is the best opportunity to remedy this critical situation, and economics should NEVER get in the way. Vote YES on HB1775 HD1

Mahalo!

Bruce Mirken

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:36:37 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Representatives,

I strongly support HB1775 HD1

Mahalo,

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:40:47 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cardenas Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this bill.

Mahalo nui,

Cardenas Pintor

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:41:24 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Nihipali	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai'i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai'i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration,

Michele Nihipali

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:59:02 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration, Susan

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:05:04 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration,

Susan Stayton, Lawai, Kauai, HI

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:17:10 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roxanne Hanawahine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Finance Committee,

I am in support of HB1775 HD1, the Department of Education should provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in the departments schools.

I ask this Finance Committee to PLEASE appropriate the funds needed to feed all keiki. For without food, keiki are not able to concentrate and comprehend, food develops a healthier body and mind.

Mahalo for your time, pass HB1775 HD1 for all keiki in Hawaii!

Roxanne Hanawahine

Concerned Kupuna

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:33:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heiley Hacoba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I am in support of HB1775. I believe all students deserve equal access to food while in school regardless of financial eligibility. Although a student's family may not meet income requirements for free or reduced lunch, they may still be struggling to put food on the table and make ends meet. I beg that you pass HB 1775 and feed all of our keiki, the future of Hawai'i.

Me ke aloha,

Heiley Hacoba

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:35:46 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roger Walraven	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Legislators,

I strongly support HB1775 HD1.

It's something that is long overdue.

My wife is a DOE retired teacher and she bought many students their lunch because they were refused because of insufficient funds in their lunch money account. Shame on us for not having done this sooner. Why should any student feel belittled by a situation that is out of their hands? It should never happen. Make the lunches better too.

There is such a thing as a free lunch and it begins with you passing this legislation.

Mahalo

Roger Walraven

Retired Kauai Resident.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:38:06 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Austin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important bill - for Hawaii's children!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:42:10 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of [HB1775_HD1](#) . Thank you.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:45:26 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita & Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I am in support of HB1775 because all students deserve equal access to food while in school. Many local families struggle to make ends meet & they don't qualify for Free or Reduced meals. Please pass HB1775 if you care about our keiki because they are preparing to be the next leaders of Hawai'i!

It is despicable to deny children this necessity. Only the USA, a government who is SUPPOSE to be for the PEOPLE would deny something as such. Don't let us down again...

sv

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:46:49 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
minda goodman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Brain development is important. It is a no brainer. I made joke. Mahalo for all you hard work. I believe we are all doing the best we can.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 5:03:46 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joyal Kihara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita & Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I am in support of HB1775 because all students deserve equal access to food while in school. Many local families struggle to make ends meet & they don't qualify for Free or Reduced meals.

As a former Counselor of over 40 years, I have seen many situations where students came to school hungry and their main meal was the school lunch.

With the costs of food having increased over the years, it is critical that students have access to nutritional meals. Students' focus and concentration are impacted when they are hungry.

Please pass HB1775 if you care about our keiki because they are preparing to be the next leaders of Hawai'i! Mahalo!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 5:07:02 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita & Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I am in support of HB1775 because all students deserve equal access to food while in school. Many local families struggle to make ends meet & they don't qualify for Free or Reduced meals. Please pass HB1775 if you care about our keiki because they are preparing to be the next leaders of Hawai'i!

Mahalo!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 5:21:53 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anne Leake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e. My name is Anne Leake and I reside in Kaneohe. I am writing in strong support of HB1775 to implement universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. I believe that providing nutritious meals to all students, regardless of the economic circumstances, is an important step to ensuring the well-being and academic success of all of our keiki.

Universal free school meal programs help reduce food insecurity, promote equity and justice, improve academic success, and eliminate stigma.

A universal free school meals program in Hawai‘i is estimated to cost \$25.5 million—only about 1 percent of the DOE’s operating budget. On the other hand, jurisdictions that offer universal free school meals see a 15 percent increase in academic performance *annually*. That's a small investment for such a big impact.

I urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. By doing so, we have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health, well-being, and future of our keiki and Hawai‘i. Mahalo!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 5:32:42 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathy Shimata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

I support HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to 1 in 4 children in Hawai'i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai'i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration,

Your Name, Town

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 5:35:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cristeta Ancog	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1775

Aloha,

As a retired pediatrician with 25 years of working with children and families on the Waianae Coast, I am fully in support of HB 1775, that will provide free breakfast and lunch to ALL public school children.

This is one of the most effective ways to improve school performance, while also improving the health of our keiki.

Many of our students do not qualify for free school meals. And for the one that do, there is a stigma attached to it. By providing meals to everyone, the students can focus on learning, not their hungry stomachs. Investing in nutritious food for our keiki will result in lifelong benefits to their health.

When universal free school meals has been implemented elsewhere, student test scores rose the equivalent of 6 additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes.

I strongly urge you to pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Cristeta Ancog M.D.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 5:46:29 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia Bilyk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the House Finance Committee, I stand in support of HB 1775 providing breakfast and lunch to all public school children in our State!

As an advanced practice clinical nurse specialist, I've seen what the lack of proper nutrition can do to children physically and mentally. Also Providing meals for all takes the stigma , bullying and shame away from meals times at school.

I feel feeding our keiki, nurtures their bodies and minds. Helping them to be ready to learn not thinking about their empty stomachs. This provides a brighter future for them and our whole community!

mahalo

Patricia Bilyk, RN, MPH, MSN- Maternal Child Clinical Nurse Specialist

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 5:52:11 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cortney Midla	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support HB1775, relating to providing free school lunches to all public school students. As a nurse and a parent, I support providing quality nutrition to all students to enhance their learning. Providing adequate nutrition has proven to improve academic outcomes.

Mahalo,

Cortney Midla

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:12:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eden Peart	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support all Hawaii Keoki and families!

Support HB1885 HD1

Source school food from local producers. Increase budgeted allocations to accomplish.

Mahalo!

Eden Marie Peart

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:20:31 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorna Holmes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Universal free school meal programs help reduce food insecurity, promote equity and justice, improve academic success, and eliminate stigma.

A universal free school meals program in Hawai'i is estimated to cost \$25.5 million—only about 1 percent of the DOE's operating budget. On the other hand, jurisdictions that offer universal free school meals see a 15 percent increase in academic performance *annually*. That's a small investment for such a big impact.

I urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai'i. By doing so, we have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health, well-being, and future of our keiki and Hawai'i.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:26:05 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kori cidade	Doe	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi Kori,

Please submit testimony if you support & pass on to friends & family!

NEED TO SUBMIT BY TOMORROW 1pm

Aloha Chair Yamashita & Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I am in support of HB1775 because all students deserve equal access to food while in school. Many local families struggle to make ends meet & they don't qualify for Free or Reduced meals. Please pass HB1775 if you care about our keiki because they are preparing to be the next leaders of Hawai'i! Mahalo!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:35:50 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolann Biederman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I urge the legislature to prioritize and support the implementation of universal free school meals in Hawai‘i. By doing so, we have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health, well-being, and future of our keiki and our state. The youngsters who have felt shy or stigmatized about accepting free school meals will no longer have to feel isolated or identified by their situation and every child will have access to healthy food.

Mahalo for your consideration. Carolann Biederman 44-391 Nilu Street #4, Kaneohe, HI 96744

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:39:33 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marjorie Maertens	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of House Committee on Finance,

I am writing in strong support of HB 1775 which would provide free breakfast and lunch to all students in DOE schools starting with the 24-25 school year. It is well known that children need to have their basic needs met to be fully engaged in their learning. Food and nutrition is a basic need that many Hawai'i families struggle with, living paycheck to paycheck, but do not meet eligibility to qualify for free school lunch. Students who are food insecure are more likely to struggle in school and experience higher rates of poor physical and mental health outcomes. This bill would help to combat food insecurity and childhood hunger in our public schools.

I work at a DOE school as an office assistant. It is DOE policy to deny a meal to a student that has a negative balance of \$25 or more on their lunch account. I have witnessed a student go through the lunch line with their plate of food, scan their ID, only to have their lunch taken away by an adult because they didn't have enough money in their account. This is incredibly stigmatizing and dehumanizing. I've also seen students come into the office to check their lunch balance and walk away knowing that they don't have enough money to eat. The last thing a child at school should have to worry about is where their next meal is going to come from. I humbly urge you to pass this bill for the benefit of our public school students. Thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony,

Marjorie Maertens

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:40:25 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brissa Donovan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1775 as all students deserve to have food, shelter, and safety at school. Ensuring children are fed will allow students to be in the best position to succeed academically. It will also allow parents to save money which can then be spent on other necessities, further bolstering our economy. This program will make an integral contribution to the collective intelligence & success of Hawaii as whole.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:44:42 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Ann Kurose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita & Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I am in support of HB1775 because all students deserve equal access to food while in school.

Many local families struggle to make ends meet & they don't qualify for Free or Reduced meals. Please pass HB1775 if you care about our keiki.

Mahalo!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 7:20:58 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keahi Coria	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of HB1775 because students need equal access to food while in school. I am a second year special education teacher and many of my students arrive to school hungry and often leave hungry. When I ask students why they haven't eaten or why they can't get lunch, it is often because their families cannot afford it. I try to support them by providing snacks to get them through the day. This support come right out of my bi-weekly check. We can no longer stand by while our students go through the day hungry. When we are hungry, we cannot learn. This is a basic need that the state can meet for the future of our keiki. Please pass HB1775. Thank you.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:05:01 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ming Wei Koh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- No Child Should Go Hungry – 2 out of 3 struggling families are not eligible for free school meals. This bill would ensure that anybody can eat for free and our hungry keiki would not be forced to skip meals.
- No child would have the stigma of having to return a meal because of no money in their school food account.
- Hungry students cannot focus on learning. All children deserve to be fed during the school day, so that they are ready to learn.
- Increased Academic Performance – When universal free school meals has been implemented elsewhere, student test scores rose the equivalent of 6 additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes.
- Improved Health Outcomes – Hungry students are at much higher risks for stress, depression and chronic disease. Investing in nutritious food for our keiki will result in lifelong benefits to their health.

Center for Getting Thingsn Started supports HB 1775.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:31:47 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samuela Tatofi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HB1775 because all students deserve equal access to food while in school. Many local families struggle to make ends meet & they don't qualify for Free or Reduced meals. Please pass HB1775 if you care about our keiki because they are preparing to be the next leaders of Hawai'i! Mahalo!!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:37:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Barker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to respectfully as that you support of HB 1775, HD1.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai'i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai'i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Melissa Barker

Kapaa, HI

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:39:54 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicola Lauu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of this bill because all students deserve equal access to food while in school. many local families struggle to make ends meet and still don't meet requirements for free or reduced meals. Please pass this bill if you care about our future keiki and Hawai'i leaders.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:48:59 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
maria hector	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I have been a public school teacher with the DOE for 12 years. I know the difference a proper meal can make in a child's learning. Free school meals would ensure breakfast AND lunch for EVERY student - and brains that are ready to grow and learn.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 9:17:54 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gwen Whiting	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

My name is Gwen Whiting and I am writing in strong support of HB1775 to implement universal free school meals in Hawai'i. The pandemic shed light on how impactful school meals are for keiki within communities across the islands. Families of various incomes rely on school meals to fuel their children as they are learning and growing.

As prices for goods and housing continue to increase, I humbly ask that you consider this bill. Food is one of the prominent ways we show love and support here in Hawaii. As families continue to rebound financially and mentally, universal free school meals would have a large reaching impact for residents who need to feel supported and unified during these trying times. No child should have to learn on an empty stomach. Thank you so much for your time and consideration on this matter.

Mahalo nui loa,

Gwen Whiting

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 9:41:09 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathleen Hagan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Food insecurity amongst keiki is of particular concern given the negative impact on childhood health and development. Of the 136,190 people that go hungry every day in the state, almost 37% (50,000) are keiki. School meal programs have been proven to improve nutrition for low income children: participants are less likely to have nutrient inadequacies and more likely to consume fruit, vegetables, and milk at breakfast and lunch. Furthermore, their body mass index tends to be lower, signifying lower obesity rates. Current eligibility requirements for enrollment for free/reduced meals limit access. Hawai'i stands out as one of a few states that allows students to be denied food when their school meal bills are not paid by their families. Due to income restrictions, many families continue to fall through this nutritional safety net leading to school meal debt, children at risk for poor nutrition, reduced concentration in school, and even "shaming." With the status quo policy, 49% of keiki in Hawai'i who are food insecure are likely ineligible for assistance. Universal free meal programs are associated with multiple positive outcomes for all children, especially those from food-insecure families. Our keiki deserve to be fed and we need them to be ready to learn, that is why I am in strong support of HB 1775.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Kathleen Hagan, parent, nurse, & teacher

Paia, Maui

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 10:02:02 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cory Harden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha legislators,

Children can't learn or grow on empty stomachs. And they don't need the shame of classmates knowing they get free or reduced price meals. Surely we can afford this!

mahalo,

Cory Harden

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 10:02:38 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel R Freund	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We want our children to learn. They won't if they are hungry. Pretty simple.

For those worried about bureaucracy, feeding all enrolled children avoids the rules, regulations, and enforcement issues - and the stigma - of means testing.

- Dan Freund, Kapaa

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 10:18:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Lalagos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Natalie Lalagos and I am a teacher at Kealakehe High School in Kailua Kona. I unequivocally and enthusiastically support HB1775 as it will have immediate positive impacts on the lives of thousands of students. We know that as adults it is often difficult to focus on any given task when we are hungry and so we put off challenging tasks until after a meal. Our students who do not eat do not have that luxury; they struggle to focus and to learn in class as a result of hunger. So often my students tell me that they are hungry and that they cannot go get a meal at the cafeteria because either they are out of, or owe money. It is abhorrent that the words "lunch debt" even exist as every student deserves to be fed without reservation or hesitation.

We create community when we eat together and we inherently create divides when breakfast and lunch become a matter of haves and have nots. Shame has no place at our lunch tables. We know that many families do not apply for Free or Reduced lunch for a variety of reasons, so please feed our students and pass HB1775.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 10:37:58 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the [2024-2025](#) school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai'i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai'i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 11:33:35 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keara Beasley	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

My name is Keara Beasley, I am an 18 year old student at University of Hawaii at Manoa and I am in support of bill H.B.1775. As a child who grew up in the public school system with a family that did not have the extra funds to pay for school lunch, how could I not support this bill? My family was not financially shown as ‘poor’ enough for the reduced price meals program. And yet, my mom had to get a second job just to pay rent. So I sat as I watched my friends eat their lunch, not only did I feel isolated but I felt hungry. Embarrassment would follow me around campus as my stomach would yell at me in class telling me to eat, as I’m sure most of my peers could hear it. At such a young age, nutrition is vital. In a study done in 2022 from the National Library of Medicine, children who do not receive enough nutrition are more likely to underperform in school. Children are our future! Why are we letting our kids go hungry? As time persisted, my family became somewhat financially stable and I was able to at least eat breakfast and grab a snack before school. However, in 2021, covid had made everyone school lunches free. Even though I had never been able to afford school lunch previously, the easy accessibility and no questions asked policy made me extremely and utterly full. I was amazed at this program. Even though I was now a teenager, I was no longer hungry in school. I remember my friend on the first day telling me that it was free, I did not believe her. When it turned out to be true, I knew that I wouldn't complain to her about being hungry all day again, as I normally did. I went to class after lunch feeling refreshed instead of grogginess and reluctance. I was not the only one who felt this way, as most of my friends were in the same boat (previously unable to either go through the paperwork or simply could not afford it). Even though it was school lunch, it made me actually want to go to school in the morning as I knew I would have a good lunch. And it may not just be me who feels this way as a study done by the National Library of Medicine in 2021 found that it would increase participation in schools. We want our children to have an educated future, but kids also WANT to be educated. It is important that they show up and want to be educated, meaning that they actually want to go to school, even if it may just be for the food. I am not the only child who went through embarrassment and shame for not being able to afford school lunch, and I am sure I will not be the last. But there is a chance to stop the pattern. Thank you for supporting our future generations and reading my experience with the public school meal program.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 11:33:46 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tony Radmilovich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is a very good thing and it is high time to have this done! Vote yes! Thank you!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 1:38:26 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Irena Bliss	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1.

Mahalo nui for your consideration,

Irena Bliss

Ha‘ikū, Maui 96708

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 5:28:53 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeenna Canche	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 22, 2024

Members of the Committee,

Please accept my testimony in support of HB 1775 requiring the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools. I have been a World Languages educator in the state of Hawaii for 18 years, and I firmly believe that our keiki deserve the right to an equitable education. Providing students with free school breakfasts and lunches helps to level the playing field for students who are economically disadvantaged or who fall through the cracks because they do not have the money for food, but they still do not qualify for assistance. Therefore, I ask that this bill be passed as is, because if it does, we will provide our students with one more tool that they need to be ready to learn when they arrive in our classrooms.

Mahalo,

Jeenna Canche

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 5:33:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Breon Michel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration,

Breon Michel, Kailua Kona

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 6:56:27 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KaMele Kopplin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My K-12 schooling was through the Hawai'i Public School System and I would be so proud to know that the school system that I went through is now providing free lunches for all children. School should be a safe place that provides a student with their basic needs, such as food. I support this bill in its goal of making these meals for accessible for our keiki.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 7:30:45 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly King	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I also strongly support legislation that gets local, healthy produce into Hawaii school meals!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 7:59:34 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sven Sorge	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration,

Sven Sorge

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 8:01:11 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paige Namahoe-Maeda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I support HB1775 because it addresses the issue of students starving in schools due to the financial burden of enforced meal fees. While the existing free and reduced meal program aims to assist those with lower incomes, it falls short of supporting all struggling families within the school system. To illustrate, while I do not qualify for free or reduced meals, my household income is just enough for a comfortable day-to-day life. I choose to have breakfast at home and bring a packed lunch to school to save on the expenses of constantly adding money to my school account.

Many states, such as California, Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Vermont, have recognized the importance of universal free school meals by establishing bills. These states utilize various methods, including government funding and tax increases. Creative solutions need to be developed to address this dire issue in Hawai'i. Some would argue that employing tax increases would be unfair to lower-income families as they would be responsible for paying for wealthier children who can afford school meals. Others argue that the Department of Education (DOE) has already received a great deal of funding, which they have handled unwisely. For example, the DOE has yet to spend its allocated \$450 million on improving school facilities statewide and desires to lapse the money to the next fiscal year. The DOE has also proposed a bill opening the gate for more government funding to potentially raise the superintendent wage by 64 percent.

A viable alternative to government funding and tax increases to address this issue is to allocate a portion of the \$2 billion DOE budget to establish universal free lunch for all students, holding the DOE accountable for its spending, starting with free lunch for all. According to the Hawai'i Public Health Institute, out of the DOE budget, initiating free lunch for all students would constitute just 1 percent, amounting to \$25 million. Given these considerations, I strongly encourage you to lend your support to advocate for the passage of this crucial bill to help the many struggling students around the islands to be able to eat.

Mahalo,

Paige Namahoe-Maeda

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 8:03:51 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Lynch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

First off, thank you for your leadership and commitment of service to the community. I would like to take this time to submit my testimony in support of HB1775: DOE Universal Free School Breakfasts and Lunches 2024/25. As you know the hard working people of Hawaii are facing hard economic challenges throughout the islands, this is reflected in the DOE student meal debt in 2022-23 was \$100K more than 4 times the amount of 2019-20. Unfortunately we are one of the few states that still allows schools to deny meals to students with a negative meal balance. What kind of trauma does this have on the employees that have to refuse a child a meal, the child who has to spend a day in school where food is being thrown away in front of their eyes while they learn hungry and the families that are struggling to get by? How much food is being thrown away if families are having struggles paying for them? Which makes one wonder how many kids are left sad and hungry, how does this impact them physically, mentally and behaviorally. Culturally we all understand that eating together and ensuring nourishment of our keiki are beliefs we can't ever lose sight of upholding.

Approving this bill almost certainly begins to show the families of DOE students, most of whom get salary increases < 64% annually, that the legislative system is committed to support the families they serve and care for their children. This is critical during a time in which many basic expense and local tax increases are causing people to move out of state.

Mahalo for your time and consideration in this matter.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 8:11:39 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kecia McDonald	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Many families struggle to make ends meet in Hawai'i but also don't qualify for free school meals. Children are often being raised by kupuna who have set incomes but cannot provide more. These students often go hungry throughout the day which hurts their academic performance and health. Providing free school meals is a great way to improve the educational experience and well-being of our keiki. Please pass HB1775.

I am a teacher and know my colleagues spend hundreds of their dollars on providing snacks for students who don't have access to free school meals. It is disruptive to the learning process to try to learn and engage in class when focus is lost due to being hungry. We see this every day. By putting food on the plate of every student, we are removing obstacles and barriers to learning and taking something off the plate of families, teachers, and our community.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 8:12:43 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kim Dempsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

As an educator, I see that many families struggle to make ends meet in Hawai'i but also don't qualify for free school meals. These students often go hungry throughout the day which hurts their academic performance and health. Providing free school meals is a great way to improve the educational experience and well-being of our keiki. Please pass HB1775.

Since the "COVID years" students have had access to no cost meals. By all having access there also is not a stigma attached to having no cost meals. Sharing food is also part of the Hawaiian culture....having access to no cost meals brings students in to the cafeteria to sit, eta and socialize with their peers.

With respect, I ask that universal school meals be accessible to ALL students.

With gratitude,

Kim Dempsey

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 8:40:28 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern:

Universal free breakfast and lunch is simply the right thing to do.

Many families who do not meet the federal guidelines are still struggling now more than ever, and providing universal free meals (as happens in other states in the nation) would help alleviate that burden, while simultaneously ensuring our keiki are fed and prepared to learn.

It is simple: feed children in our public schools, regardless of their financial status.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jessica Kato (public school parent)

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 8:42:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1.

me ke aloha ‘āina,

Nanea Lo, Mō‘ili‘ili, O‘ahu

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 8:51:46 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Fitzpatrick	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a teacher at Kulanihako'i, we see that many families struggle to make ends meet in Hawai'i but also don't qualify for free school meals. 57% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch, but many are on the edge of qualifying. These students often go hungry throughout the day which hurts their academic performance and health. Providing free school meals is a great way to improve the educational experience and well-being of our keiki. Please pass HB1775.

Mahalo!

Fitz

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 9:02:53 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Regina Gregory	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 9:16:27 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
colleen everett	James B. Castle High School Student Body	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Many families struggle to make ends meet in Hawai'i but also don't qualify for free school meals. These students often go hungry throughout the day which hurts their academic performance and health. Providing free school meals is a great way to improve the educational experience and well-being of our keiki. Please pass HB1775.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 9:20:49 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ellen Tupou	Teacher at Kealakehe Intermediate School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Many families struggle to make ends meet in Hawai'i but also don't qualify for free school meals. These students often go hungry throughout the day which hurts their academic performance and health. Providing free school meals is a great way to improve the educational experience and well-being of our keiki. Please pass HB1775.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 9:24:36 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Suzanne Dadzie	Hawaii Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

I urge you to consider implementing universal free school meals for all of Hawaii's public school students. Maslow's hierarchy of needs underscores the fundamental importance of fulfilling basic physiological needs, such as food, before higher-level needs, like education, can be effectively addressed.

For many families, the cost of school meals presents a significant barrier to accessing the balanced diet essential for their children's well-being and ability to learn. Without proper nutrition, students may struggle with hunger, which can lead to stress, depression, and chronic health issues. It's alarming that two out of three struggling families do not qualify for free school meals, leaving many children without reliable access to food.

Universal free school meals offer a crucial solution by ensuring that all students have access to daily nourishment, regardless of their family's financial situation. Moreover, research has shown that schools implementing such programs have witnessed notable improvements in academic performance. This isn't surprising when considering that Maslow's theory suggests that students must have their primary needs met, including food, in order to be able to engage effectively in learning.

The data speaks volumes: schools that have embraced free school meals have seen significant boosts in Math and English test scores equivalent to attending six additional weeks of school. This achievement is not only commendable but also indicative of the transformative impact that access to nutritious meals can have on a student's educational journey.

It's worth noting that the financial investment required for universal free school meals is comparatively modest, especially when weighed against the potential benefits. While providing an additional six weeks of schooling would incur an annual cost of \$300 million for Hawaii, implementing universal free school meals would only require \$25 million annually. This investment is not just about feeding our students; it's an investment in their future success and the overall well-being of our community.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Hawaii Board of Education to prioritize the implementation of universal free school meals across all public schools in the state. By doing so, we can ensure that

every student has the opportunity to thrive academically, emotionally, and physically, laying the foundation for a brighter and more equitable future for all.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Mahalo

Suzanne Dadzie

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 9:27:48 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Many families struggle to make ends meet in Hawai'i and do not qualify for free/reduced school meals. These students often go hungry throughout the day which hurts their academic performance and health. Providing free school meals is a great way to improve the educational experience and well-being of our children. Please pass HB1775.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 9:36:36 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
randy awo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators. I stand in strong support of this Bill. Our keiki should have free access to nutritional meals as a fundamental requirement to promoting successful educational outcomes. I urge you to support this bill. Mahalo nui - Randy Awo

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 10:06:07 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaanohiokala Kalama-Macomber	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Kitagawa,

My name is Ka‘anohiokalā Kalama-Macomber and I am writing in support of HB1775. As a mother of three school aged children, access to food for our keiki is of extreme importance to me. We have always fallen into the category of ‘ohana who make just over the limit to qualify for any public supports, as is the case for many ‘ohana in Hawai‘i. Like many others, my husband and I have what would be considered solid careers and yet we still struggle to afford living here in Hawai‘i. As an employee of the state, I also hear all too often from our educators about the struggles they face with the need to simply hold students' attention because they are either too tired as a result of less than ideal living conditions or have not had enough to eat. Meals should never be a barrier to student success in learning. Unfortunately, we know that it is the case for many. Much of this stems from the family's ability to afford meals. If we desire to have an education system that is truly supportive of the whole child, certain priorities need to be in place - safe and engaging learning environments and access to healthy food should be a part of those priorities. Please pass HB1775 to support a well-fed and thriving Hawai‘i!

Mahalo,

Ka‘anohiokalā Kalama-Macomber

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 10:21:21 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
M. Llanes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

HAPA supports HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai‘i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai‘i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1

Thank you for your consideration,

MeleLani Llanes, Makakilo, O'ahu

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 11:12:01 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeanie Stewart	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm a teacher at Kūlanihāko'i High School in Kihei, HI. I think it's important for all of our children on the islands to be well nourished to help them learn and feel taken care of. This bill is important, and I encourage you to support our keiki. Please vote yes.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 11:21:42 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mina Tanner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I am writing in support of HB1775 because every student deserves to have access to food in public schools. Many students already qualify for free or reduced lunch, and many more struggle with access to food. Providing food to school age children will not only alleviate financial stress, but also protect the health and safety of school age children. Furthermore, concentration in studies (and consequently grades) will improve, as students will not have to worry about where their next meal is coming from. Please pass HB1775 if you care about the safety of our keiki, because they are our future leaders. Mahalo!

CLIFFORD CHANG, MPH

RESIDENCE

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Date: February 22, 2024
To: Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Finance

Re: Strong Support for HB1775 HD1 Relating to Education
Hrg: Friday, February 23, 2024; 1:00 pm; Conference Room 308 via Videoconference

My name is Clifford Chang, testifying today both as the principal in my public health consulting business, Clifford Chang Consulting, and as a private individual with over 40 years of public health experience in the areas of HIV and STD prevention and treatment, tobacco control and prevention, school health education and access to primary health care.

I am testifying in **strong support for HB1775 HD1**, which beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the Department of Education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in department schools.

Universal free school meals will ensure that every child attending public school in Hawai'i has access to a nutritious and balanced meal while in school, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Currently, 2 out of 3 struggling families are ineligible for free school meals, and the cost of school meals can be a barrier to accessing nutritious meals. Universal free school meals can alleviate the financial burden on families and promote a healthier, more equitable educational environment.

Having universal free school meals would mean the end for any child in Hawai'i's public schools having to face the stigma of having to return a meal because of no money in their school food account. Having access to free school meals would result in there being less hungry students attending our schools, enabling them to better able to focus on learning and be ready to learn. Experience from other places with universal free meals has shown an increase in student academic performance. In such places student test scores rose the equivalent of 6 additional weeks of school. A 1% increase in the Department of Education budget can provide a 15% increase in outcomes.

Hungry students are at much higher risks for stress, depression and chronic disease. Investing in nutritious food for our students will result in lifelong benefits to their health.

I urge you to support and pass out HB1775 HD1, which supports better physical health and increases students' ability to concentrate, learn, and thrive academically.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify.

Aloha,



Clifford Chang

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 12:54:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nolan Markpol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Vice chair Kitagawa,

I support HB1775 Because our keiki who do not qualify for free reduced lunch deserve to have access to food just like their peers. I am a junior at Castle high school and I would like for every student in the state to have free and reduced lunch because there are definitely students who go to school everyday because they can't afford lunch. Then since they are on an empty stomach they start to lose their focus in class and around school which will eventually cause them to have their grades drop. Then when they are at school they act as grumpy as a grizzly bear. They are definitely people who go an entire day without eating until they go home because they can't afford or pay to eat at school. So how do you think you would feel if you went to work an entire day without eating would you focus?

Mahalo,

Nolan Markpol

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 12:55:15 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ciane Ayers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita & Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I am in support of HB1775 because all students deserve equal access to food while in school. Many local families struggle to make ends meet & they don't qualify for Free or Reduced meals. Please pass HB1775 if you care about our keiki because they are preparing to be the next leaders of Hawai'i!

Mahalo nui loa!

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 12:56:02 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Irons	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, and Vice Chair Kitagawa

I am Michael Irons, I'm a junior at Castle High School, and I support HB1775, because it has been shown that when students can eat lunch they are more productive with thier schoolwork. And I myself am often unable to get lunch as I do not have the money in my account nor do I have the money to pay off what is needed to buy a lunch everyday. I truly hope that HB1775 is passed because it would mean that not just me but also future students would no longer have to worry about if we'll be able to eat lunch or not.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 12:56:09 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Darrylboy Cobb-Adams	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Vice Kitagawa,

I am a juinoe at Castle Highschool and I support HB1775 because kids that do not qualify for free reduced school lunch deserve to have an equal acces to school lunch. Because the kids at school are participating in learing a veriety of activities, including attending classes where they learn multiple subjects. And school lunches would give students the energy they need to concentrate and participate actevley in their classes and activities throught the school day.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 12:57:02 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
matthew hanamaikai-puu	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Yamashita Vice-Chair Kitagawa

I am Matthew Hanamaikai-Puu and I am in support of HB1775 because our keiki who do not qualify for FREE or Reduced lunch deserve equal access to food as their peers. Food is essential to my body as I am a growing boy. FREE or Reduced lunch will make it easier for me to concentrate on what I need, like school work and home. if this year taught me anything is that a child should never go hungry. I would love it if you guys pass this bill and make it easier for children like me to grow bigger and stranger.

Mahalo,

Matthew Hanamaikai-Puu

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 12:59:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Shimabukuro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita & Vice Chair Kitagawa,

Hello I am Uilani Shimabukuro and I am a Junior at Castle High School. I support HB1775 because our keiki who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch deserve to have equal access to food as their peers. Food is the most important thing when it comes to school because we need the energy to stay focused and be able to stay awake to learn. Or sometimes with an empty stomach some people will feel nauseous. Especially, when the poor can't afford the lunch. Always coming to school and going home hungry, that is not right. Without food we would go to class being grumpy like shrek. What would you do if your kid was starving everyday ?

Mahalo,

Uilani Shimabukuro

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 1:00:01 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
alia cyd bruhn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I am Alia Cyd Bruhn and I am a junior at Castle High School. I support HB1775 because I believe that everyone who doesn't qualify for free and reduced lunch shouldn't have to suffer paying for every meal. It makes it very unfair for the students who do not have the money to afford it. Most students who don't eat have a very hard time focusing in school and I am one of them. If you were to put yourself in that point of view, how would that affect you? I would be grumpy just like my mom with no sleep.

Mahalo,

Alia Cyd Bruhn

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 1:00:11 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Logan Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita & Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I am Logan Thompson and a Junior at Castle High School and I support Bill HB1775 because I think that all keiki should be able to have free or reduced lunch at school. Most kids struggle to study and focus in class due to not being able to eat during a 6 hour school day. Most people at Castle High School go hungry all day at school and would be able to eat all day I believe that if all students were able to eat for free or a reduced price, then it would be easier for us students to help study more and get better grades to help make the state education system better than it is. Students go to class and wont be able to focus on a certain thing like a little kid at Disney. How would feel if your student couldn't get a free meal but people at jail can ?

Mahalo,

Logan Thompson

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 1:01:15 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Pokipala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita & Vice Chair Kitagawa,

I support HB1775 because our keiki who do not qualify for Free or Reduced lunch deserve to have equal access to food as their peers. Food is essential to my high school students bodies as they are growing, participating in extra curricular, and in order for them to be their best in class, they need food in their bodies. Many of our local families do not qualify, but this does not mean they are earning enough to put money on their children's accounts because many of these families have more than one child. My high school students wait till they get home to eat, which is an issue for us teachers because they have a hard time focusing in class and become tired quickly. If the State can provide free meals to inmates, why can't the DOE & State figure out a way to feed our keiki who are expected to be the leaders of tomorrow? If the DOE has \$2 billion in unspent funds for construction projects, why not put that money towards feeding our keiki? If the State & DOE believes in making Hawai`i a place for our keiki to call home, why aren't we taking care of their basic needs? I appreciate the time you folks take to read these testimonies, I appreciate the efforts you put towards maing hard decisions, and I appreciate the sacrifices you make for the betterment of our communities! Mahalo nui!!!

To: House Finance Committee Chair Yamashita, Co-Chair Rep. Kitagawa & Committee Members
From: Elizabeth Pa Nakea, Castle High School
Date: 2/22/2024
Re: Testimony in Support of HB1775 for Universal Free Lunch for Hawaii's Students

Aloha House Finance Committee Chair Yamashita, Co-Chair Rep. Kitagawa, and Committee Members,
As an educator at Castle High School and a concerned community member, I am writing to urge your support for universal free lunch for Hawaii's students, as proposed in HB1775. This legislation presents a pivotal opportunity to prioritize the well-being and success of our keiki, ensuring that every child has access to the nourishment they need to thrive.

Our state budget reflects our values and priorities as a community. As we allocate resources, we must ask ourselves: What matters most? Is it the comfort of public officials, or the well-being of our children? Is it the status quo, or the pursuit of equity and justice for all?

Far too many of our students face food insecurity, arriving at school hungry and unable to focus on their studies. Universal free lunch is not merely a matter of convenience; it is a moral imperative. It is a declaration of our commitment to the well-being of every child, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Imagine a Hawaii where no child goes hungry, where every student has access to nutritious meals that fuel their bodies and minds. This is not just a dream; it is within our reach if we have the courage to prioritize the needs of our students over other expenditures.

Critics may argue that implementing universal free lunch will lead to higher taxes for all in Hawaii. However, by properly prioritizing and targeting our investments, we can ensure that our resources are used effectively to support our students' success. In addition to providing free meals, we must also invest in other essential needs, such as buses and bus drivers to ensure students can get to school safely, and funds for air conditioning to create conducive learning environments.

In conclusion, I urge you to seize this opportunity to lead with courage and compassion. Let us prioritize the urgent needs of our students over other expenditures. Let us invest in the future of Hawaii by investing in the well-being of our children.

Mahalo for your attention to this critical issue, and for your commitment to creating a brighter, more equitable future for all.

Me ka mana'o nui,

Elizabeth Pa Nakea, Castle High Teacher

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 1:14:43 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vikena Ho'olulu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita,

My name is Vikena Ho'olulu and I am a junior at James B. Castle Highschool. I am in support of bill HB1775 because I now understand that the DOE of Hawai'i can afford to provide statewide free meals but just aren't using funds correctly. Like other states we could comfortably provide meals for the keiki and teens of Hawai'i. So no kid has to worry about their stomachs grumbling.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 1:16:34 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sally Kaufmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I work in a rural school district as a school nurse. Hungry students cannot focus on learning. All children deserve to be fed during the school day, so that they are ready to learn. I provide snacks and protein drinks daily to the students who have not eaten the entire day and see increased academic performance when I can get them to return to class vs sending them home. Data outcome supports that hungry students are at much higher risks for stress, depression and chronic disease. Investing in nutritious food for our keiki will result in lifelong benefits to their health.

Mahalo for your time,

Sally Kaufmann

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the committee,

I strongly support HB 1775. Kids can't learn when they're hungry, they can't concentrate on learning when they're wondering where their next meal is coming from. Free meals for all public school kids will go a long way towards allowing school children to concentrate on their education and be a step towards solving food insecurity.

Mahalo for your time,

Michael Paul

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 1:22:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicholle S L Konanui	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha nui Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1775, HD1.

I support HB540 HD1 which, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, requires the department of education and public charter schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students.

Nutrition is essential to all growing children and teenagers. It has been shown to vastly improve academic outcomes. However, there are still up to one in four children in Hawai'i that regularly go without enough nutritious meals at home. This means that for many children in Hawai'i, school breakfast and lunch are the most nutritious meals they get in a day. Being able to feed all students regardless of need at no cost to the students allows for us to remove the stigma of being on "Free/Reduced Lunch" programs, and also removes a huge burden from parents who will no longer have to worry about making sure their children are able to eat while at school.

Please support HB 1775, HD1 and help keep our keiki nourished.

Mahalo nui for your time and consideration,

Nicholle S. L. Konanui, Pahoia, Hawai'i Island

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 2:01:04 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nora Pollard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a teacher, it's clear that many families struggle to make ends meet in Hawai'i but also don't qualify for free school meals. These students often go hungry throughout the day which hurts their academic performance and health. While some teachers provide snacks for those students, it comes from teacher's pockets and doesn't fulfill the nutritional needs of students. Providing free school meals is a great way to improve the educational experience and well-being of our keiki. Please pass HB1775.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 2:29:37 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenny Steele	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings,

My name is Jenny Steele, and I am a teacher at Castle High School. Through my years of working closely with students, I've noticed a concerning trend: many of them arrive at school hungry and struggle with hunger throughout the day. The reasons for their hunger vary, but during the COVID pandemic, providing food to students was a significant relief. I observed that students who had access to meals on campus were less hungry and consequently displayed improved behavior and academic performance. Therefore, I urge you to approve this bill. Let's provide consistent support for our students' nutritional needs and observe the positive impact it has on their academic achievements and behavior.

Thank you for your time and attention.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 3:31:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Josiah Kruz	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly support HB1775 because it will ensure that every child has access to a nutritious meal, regardless of their family's financial circumstances.

Imagine the transformative power of a simple meal. It's not just about filling bellies; it's about fueling dreams. It's about giving every child the opportunity to reach their full potential, to chase their aspirations, and to build a brighter future for themselves and for our beloved state.

But beyond the individual impact, providing free school lunches sends a powerful message about who we are as a community. It's a declaration that in Hawaii, we take care of our own. It's a testament to our values of aloha and ohana. Values that remind us that we are all connected and that we all have a responsibility to uplift and support one another.

Let us stand united in our commitment to the well-being of our children, and let us pass this bill. We are not just providing meals; we are nourishing hope, fostering opportunity, and building a stronger, more compassionate Hawaii for generations to come.

To: Hawaii State House Committee on Finance
Hearing Date/Time: Friday February 23, 2024, 1:00pm
Place: Hawaii State Capitol, CR 308 & Videoconference
Re: Judith Ann Armstrong supports HB1775 Relating to Education

Dear Chair Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair Rep Lisa Kitagawa and members of the Committee on Finance

I, Judith Ann Armstrong, support HB1775 Relating to Education.

The Case for Universal Free School Meals

1. Promote Equity and Justice

1. To qualify for free school meals, a household of 4 would need to make less than \$44,000 per year. This leaves 2 out of 3 Hawai'i households that struggle to make ends meet ineligible for free school meals.

2. Reduce Childhood Food Insecurity

1. A 2022 study of schools implementing UFSM found an almost 5% decline in household food insecurity.

3. Improve Academic Performance

1. Students who eat better do better than students who miss meals. Studies of UFSM in other states have shown large test scores and academic improvements at participating schools.

4. Eliminate Stigma

1. By making meals universally free, UFSM eliminates the stigma associated with having school meal debt, or receiving free or reduced-price meals, creating a more inclusive and supportive school environment.

5. Leverage Shared Investment

1. UFSM requires a significant financial investment (approximately \$25.5M) and there are a web of funding options and community partnerships available to ensure equitable implementation, including federal funding and state and local resources.

A

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB1775.

Sincerely,

Judith Ann Armstrong

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 4:13:42 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hunter Matsuyama	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Kitagawa,

My name is Hunter Matsuyama, a student of Castle High School and I neither oppose nor support this bill. I just have some questions. What would the proposed options be for funding this bill if passed?

One concern I have is if the funding comes from taxing the people, would it create a hardship for the families who are already financially challenged or might this bill push people on the edge of financial instability even further due to taxing people even more?

Suggestions:

- **Infrastructure work would create jobs that would help families pay for their school lunches.**
- **Federal Grant**
- **State Grant managed by the State**
- **Diminish DOE programs & funds**

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 8:07:24 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kiana Otsuka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testifying in strong support.

RE: HB 1775 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Position: Strong Support

February 24, 2024

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Christine Russo and I am a teacher at James Campbell High School. I strongly support this measure.

Families that come from households with limited means may not understand the process to apply for free and reduced lunch, especially if these households are not English proficient. Additionally, according to Civil Beat, Hawaii is one of only a few states with laws that allow students to be denied food when their parents fail to pay school lunch bills.

We put a great deal of emphasis on student outcomes such as test scores however if we want to improve student output we must address student input such as access to qualified teachers and healthy meals. Providing students with food security at school is one step towards helping students have their basic needs met so they can be ready to learn. Providing students with universal free lunch may also be an important tool to help decrease the chronic absenteeism that has plagued schools ever since the Covid-19 Pandemic.

For these reasons, please consider passing this important measure. Mahalo!

Christine Russo

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 9:58:10 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erik Meade	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on HB 1775, which I support.

I think it is a good idea that we don't let any children go hungry. If that means every child is guaranteed breakfast and lunch while going to school I am all for it.

Thank you for your consideration,
Erik Meade, Honolulu

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2024 4:12:09 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

It is essential to nourish the body in order to nourish the mind. Hungry children do not do well in school. Help children learn by affording them a well balanced lunch, please.

Susan Russo

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2024 7:56:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jingwoan Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

As a veteran educator I have seen how families struggle to make ends meet, but also that there might be shame or embarrassment over asking for help. Many families who struggle with the high cost of living don't qualify for free school meals. These students often go hungry throughout the day, which has a negative impact on their well-being and learning. Providing free school meals is a great way to improve the educational experience and well-being of our keiki. This would also alleviate time pressures for families with busy, working adults. Please pass HB1775. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1775-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2024 9:00:27 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Goossens-Larsen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Many families struggle to make ends meet in Hawai'i but also don't qualify for free school meals. These students often go hungry throughout the day which hurts their academic performance and health. Providing free school meals is a great way to improve the educational experience and well-being of our keiki. Please pass HB1775.

Mahalo!

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

My name is Kayley Rathert, I am an undergraduate student at the University of Hawaii Manoa, and I am writing in support of HB1775 to implement universal free school meals in Hawai'i. As a previous California resident and student, the positive impact of the implementation of universal free school breakfast and lunches is very apparent, and it will likely be the same here in Hawai'i

Even with the The Nation School Lunch Program enacted, many children still go to school hungry with little to know food to eat throughout the day. In an article from the University of Illinois, it states that, a study of 500 low-income parents and their children ages 13 to 18 was conducted by No Kid Hungry in 2017, and about 59% of the children surveyed claimed regularly arriving at school hungry. Although the meals provided through HB1775 will not stop children from arriving at school hungry, the breakfast and lunch that they would normally be lacking would help them concentrate more during instruction periods and have one less thing to worry their young minds.

A common occurrence for families who qualify for free lunch through The National School Lunch Program but do not end up receiving anything is because the parents struggle or are unable to conjure up and fill out the correct paperwork. Some of the parents of these families work two to three jobs, allowing them little to no time to complete everything necessary to qualify.

Another current issue for children who do currently qualify for the reduced or free lunches is the negative stigma associated with their families being unable to afford food without government help. An article from Harvard University states, "Research led by Cohen found that 42% of families eligible for free or reduced-price meals said that their child would be less likely to eat a school meal unless it was free for all students." If Hawai'i enacted HB1775, less students would worry about being judged by classmates and feel more comfortable at school.

The implementation of universal free meals in Hawai'i does not have a drastic impact on overall budgets either, with the \$30 million estimate only equating to 1.5% to 2% of the current Department of Education Budget.

For many years, teachers have taken note numerous children lack sufficient portions of food eaten during the school day and have taken it upon themselves to stock a small stash of snacks, which is provided directly from the teacher. Not only that, but a family member of mine who is a teacher has noticed that students who show poor behavior in their class tend to have insufficient meals before and during school hours. This family member of mine teaches at the elementary level and they have noticed multiple students in their class every year do not have anything to eat for lunch so they keep a drawer of snacks for children as necessary. This is not a problem that should be put on the teachers, but rather addressed by the school and districts.

Nutrition is such an essential part of life, especially those who are very impressionable and still developing, so if kids are required to attend, ensuring they are fed should also be required.