

---

---

# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii's working  
2 families face significant economic challenges, including the  
3 rising cost of living, inflation, and limited affordable options  
4 for basic needs. Access to nutritious meals is essential for  
5 the overall well-being of Hawaii's people. Further, for  
6 students, healthy meals are critical to academic success.  
7 However, for some students, school meals may be their only  
8 consistent source of food.

9           The legislature further finds that research shows students  
10 experiencing food insecurity face a higher risk of stress,  
11 depression, and chronic disease. Additionally, studies have  
12 found that free school meal programs lead to improved student  
13 performance. When universal free school meals have been  
14 implemented elsewhere, student test scores rose the equivalent  
15 of six additional weeks of school, making the program one of the  
16 most cost effective and sustainable academic interventions that  
17 the State can establish.



1           The legislature additionally finds that Act 139, Session  
2 Laws of Hawaii 2025, expands free school meal coverage to  
3 students who currently qualify for reduced-price lunch beginning  
4 with the 2025-2026 school year and expands coverage to students  
5 whose family income is no more than three hundred per cent of  
6 the federal poverty level beginning with the 2026-2027 school  
7 year. Despite these gains, however, thousands of students  
8 across the islands are still going hungry because of a lack of  
9 resources to ensure consistent food security for themselves and  
10 their families.

11           Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to expand free  
12 school meal coverage to all public school students, including  
13 public charter school students, beginning in the 2029-2030  
14 school year.

15           SECTION 2. Chapter 302D, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
16 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
17 and to read as follows:

18           "§302D-           School meals. (a) Beginning with the 2029-  
19 2030 school year, free school meals shall be provided to every  
20 student enrolled in a public charter school, regardless of a



1 student's eligibility for participation in a federal school  
2 meals program.

3 (b) No student shall be denied a meal solely for failure  
4 to pay for the meal.

5 (c) The commission may adopt rules or policies governing  
6 the collection of funds for student meal accounts with a  
7 negative fund balance; provided that no rule or policy shall  
8 prohibit feeding a student or otherwise conflict with subsection  
9 (b).

10 (d) It is the intent of this section not to jeopardize the  
11 receipt of any federal aid and to the extent, and only to the  
12 extent necessary to effectuate this intent, the governor may  
13 modify the strict provisions of this section, but shall promptly  
14 report any such modification with the governor's reasons  
15 therefore to the next succeeding session of the legislature for  
16 review.

17 (e) As used in this section, "school meals" means  
18 breakfast and lunch prepared and served by a school cafeteria or  
19 a food vendor that is located outside of school grounds, as  
20 designated by a public charter school."



1 SECTION 3. Section 302A-404, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
2 amended to read as follows:

3 "**§302A-404 School meals.** (a) School meals shall be made  
4 available under the school meals program in every school where  
5 the students are required to eat meals at school.

6 (b) Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, students who  
7 qualify for reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch  
8 Program shall receive free school meals.

9 (c) Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, free school  
10 meals shall be provided to every student enrolled in a  
11 department school whose family income is [~~not~~] no more than  
12 three hundred per cent of the federal poverty level, regardless  
13 of a student's eligibility for participation in the federal  
14 school meals program.

15 (d) Beginning with the 2029-2030 school year, free school  
16 meals shall be provided to every student enrolled in a  
17 department school, regardless of a student's eligibility for  
18 participation in a federal school meals program.

19 [~~d~~] (e) No student shall be denied a meal solely for  
20 failure to pay.



1        [~~(e)~~] (f) The department may adopt rules or policies  
2 governing the collection of funds for student meal accounts with  
3 a negative fund balance; provided that no rule or policy shall  
4 prohibit feeding a student or otherwise conflict with subsection  
5 [~~(d)~~.] (e).

6        [~~(f)~~] (g) It is the intent of this section not to  
7 jeopardize the receipt of any federal aid and, only to the  
8 extent necessary to effectuate this intent, the governor may  
9 modify strict provisions of this section, but shall promptly  
10 report any modification with the governor's reasons therefore to  
11 the next succeeding session of the legislature for review."

12        SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
13 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

14        SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



**Report Title:**

DOE Schools; Public Charter Schools; School Meals; Free

**Description:**

Expands free school meal coverage, beginning with the 2029-2030 school year, to all public school students, including public charter school students, regardless of whether the student participates in a federal school meals program. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

