

MAR 16 2026

SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO PROVIDE FREE SCHOOL MEALS TO EVERY STUDENT ENROLLED IN A DEPARTMENT SCHOOL, REGARDLESS OF A STUDENT'S ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN A FEDERAL SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM, BEGINNING WITH THE 2029-2030 SCHOOL YEAR.

1 WHEREAS, the State's working families face significant
2 economic challenges, including the rising cost of living,
3 inflation, and limited affordable options for basic needs; and
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5 WHEREAS, access to nutritious meals is essential for the
6 overall well-being of the State's people and particularly
7 critical to academic success for students; and
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9 WHEREAS, for some students, however, school meals may be
10 their only consistent source of food; and
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12 WHEREAS, research shows students experiencing food
13 insecurity face a higher risk of stress, depression, and chronic
14 disease; and
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16 WHEREAS, studies have also found that free school meal
17 programs lead to improved student performance; and
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19 WHEREAS, when universal free school meal programs have been
20 implemented elsewhere, student test scores rose at a rate
21 equivalent to six additional weeks of school, making the program
22 one of the most cost effective and sustainable academic
23 interventions available to the State; and
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25 WHEREAS, Act 139, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, expanded
26 free school meal coverage to students who qualify for
27 reduced-price lunch beginning with the 2025-2026 school year and
28 will expand coverage to students whose family income is not more
29 than three hundred percent of the federal poverty level
30 beginning with the 2026-2027 school year; and
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32 WHEREAS, despite these gains, however, thousands of
33 students across the islands of the State are still going hungry



1 because of a lack of resources to ensure consistent food
2 security for themselves and their families; now, therefore,
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4 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
5 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026,
6 that the Department of Education is requested to provide free
7 school meals to every student enrolled in a department school,
8 regardless of a student's eligibility for participation in a
9 federal school meals program, beginning with the 2029-2030
10 school year; and
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12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
13 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of
14 Education and Superintendent of Education.
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OFFERED BY: *David M. Rindler*

