HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL

KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

No. 25-2

RESOLUTION

URGING THE HAWAI'I STATE LEGISLATURE TO ADOPT LEGISLATION THAT WOULD CREATE A UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS.

WHEREAS, one out of every three households in the City and County of Honolulu ("City") faces food insecurity and cannot access sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs; and

WHEREAS, according to the Hawai'i Foodbank's 2023 report, "The State of Food Insecurity in Hawai'i," households with young children face food insecurity at higher rates than households without children; and

WHEREAS, hunger and insufficient access to healthy food among young children are highly correlated to negative impacts in academic performance, including poorer grades, lower test scores, and worse graduation outcomes; and

WHEREAS, it has been reported that Hawai'i is one of the few states that allows students to be denied food when parents or guardians fail to pay negative balances on their school meal accounts; and

WHEREAS, according to the Hawai'i Hunger Action Network, despite the availability of free and reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program, a federally-assisted meal program, many families in the City cannot access free or reduced-price meals because of eligibility thresholds that put this benefit out of reach for the City's asset-limited, income-constrained, employed families; and

WHEREAS, among those who qualify for the National School Lunch Program's free or reduced-price meals, 34 percent of eligible students nationally do not receive these benefits because language barriers, issues with providing income records, and a general fear of disclosing information prevent many from completing the application necessary to receive benefits; and

WHEREAS, access to nutritious meals is as essential to a young student's education as textbooks and school supplies, with studies showing that it improves academic achievement, test scores, and cognitive function; and

WHEREAS, eight states, including California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Vermont, have implemented universal free school meal programs for public school students; and

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WHEREAS, it would cost the State Department of Education ("DOE") approximately 25 million dollars annually, or just over 1 percent of the DOE's budget, to implement a universal free school meal program for public school students; and,

WHEREAS, ensuring universal access to school meal programs, regardless of the socioeconomic background of students, ensures all students receive healthy meals, fills the nutrition gap between children from lower- and higher-income households, and eliminates the stigma associated with meal debt; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that it urges the Hawai'i State Legislature to adopt legislation that would create a universal free school lunch program for public school students, including Department of Education and charter school students; and

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BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor, the President of the Hawai'i State Senate, the Speaker of the Hawai'i State House of Representatives, the Chair of the Hawai'i State Senate Committee on Education, the Chair of the Hawai'i State Senate Committee on Ways and Means, the Chair of the Hawai'i State House of Representatives Committee on Education, the Chair of the Hawai'i State House of Representatives Committee on Finance, the Superintendent of the Hawai'i State Department of Education, and the Chairperson of the Hawai'i State Board of Education.

INTRODUCED BY:

DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

JAN 2 2025

Honolulu, Hawai'i

Councilmembers

CITY COUNCIL
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
HONOLULU, HAWAII

CERTIFICATE

RESOLUTION 25-2

Introduced: 01/02/25 By: TYLER DOS SANTOS-TAM Committee: HOUSING, SUSTAINABILITY, ECONOMY & HEALTH (HSEH)

Title: URGING THE HAWAI'I STATE LEGISLATURE TO ADOPT LEGISLATION THAT WOULD CREATE A UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS.

Voting Legend: * = Aye w/Reservations

01/02/25	INTRO	Introduced.
01/14/25	HSEH	Reported out for adoption. CR-6 4 AYES: CORDERO, DOS SANTOS-TAM, TULBA, WEYER 1 ABSENT: TUPOLA
01/29/25	CCL	Committee report and Resolution were adopted. 7 AYES: CORDERO, KIA'ĀINA, NISHIMOTO, TULBA, TUPOLA, WATERS, WEYER 2 ABSENT: DOS SANTOS-TAM, OKIMOTO

I hereby certify that the above is a true record of action by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu on this RESOLUTION.

GLEN I. TAKAHASHI, CITY CLERK

TOMMY WATERS, CHAIR AND PRESIDING OFFICER