RES25-002
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 1

HOUSING, SUSTAINABILITY, ECONOMY & HEALTH (HSEH)

HOUSING, SUSTAINABILITY, ECONOMY & HEALTH (HSEH) Meeting

Meeting Date: Jan 14, 2025 @ 01:00 PM

Support: 5

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Gabrielle Igarta	igarta.gabrielle@gmail.com	96792
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Jan 10, 2025 @ 06:22 PM

Testimony:

Aloha mai kakou, I am writing today to express my support of RES 25-2. Providing free universal meals to our keiki who struggle with food insecurity is integral to their development, especially in cases where school lunch is the only meal they eat for the day. This program would be greatly appreciated not just in lower income areas, but throughout our islands.

Mahalo!

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Jun Shin	junshinbusiness729@gmail.com	96814
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Jan 13, 2025 @ 09:13 AM

Testimony:

I will be testifying in person, but making sure all kids are able to get food, regardless of ability to pay should be our upmost priority.

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Keoni Shizuma	kawikasmail@gmail.com	96744
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Jan 13, 2025 @ 02:46 PM

Testimony:

Aloha, e kala mai for the lateness of this testimony but I was not aware that the agendas were online till today. I did want to submit testimony in submit of this resolution. Being a former teacher in Hawaii, I am keenly aware of the fact that many of our families are in poverty and do not get healthy meals consistently in their homes. Sadly, it could be discussed on how healthy our meals are, but I do believe that the current meals provided at DOE schools are many times the best meals some of these students do receive. I recently heard in an interview of the stigma some students receive when having discounted meals because of the economic hardship their family is in. This is challenging on any developing student, with enough pressures and challenging already around them, growing up in these modern day times. We need not provide another mental stress on them by having them to identify that they are low-income. We also need not make it any more challenging for the parents who work multiple jobs, to remember to have file the correct paperwork monthly in order to continue receiving discounted or free school meals for their child. Let's make it easier on our low-income families, which, by the way, is a growing population as the cost of living continues to increase.

I think it is imperative that we provide universal free school meals. Please support this resolution.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Nate Hix	nate@hiphi.org	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Hawai'i Public Health Institute	Support	Jan 13, 2025 @ 05:26 PM

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Noel Shaw	noelkshaw@gmail.com	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Jan 14, 2025 @ 12:01 AM

Testimony:

Aloha,

Mahalo to Councilmember Tyler Dos Santos- Tam for bringing this important issue to the County's attention, following suit with the work of Hawai'i and Maui County. I am righting in passionate support for the Honolulu City County urging the Legislature to adopt Free School Meals for all Public School students in Hawai'i.

Food is an essential school supply- crucial to the ability of students to learn and engage in the classroom. It's also a staple way of demonstrating care that we're all familiar with here in Hawai'i. And yet, 1 in 3 people struggle with food insecurity here. A school meal could be the only access to food some are provided with in a day. In a place that claims to cherish our keiki, making sure they're fed at school is an important means of actualizing it.

As a parent of three with two in the public school system so far, I am so grateful they attend a Title 1 school that qualifies for free school meals at this time. The mental load that's lifted in knowing that when they go to school they're fed is massive and not having to worry about how to pay for it really is a relief. I wish this for every parent and care taker in Hawai'i.

Further as we move towards our collective goals of more locally produced foods and products- the hope is that these school meals will be nutritionally dense and support our local curricula economy.

Our keiki are so worthy of this investment and for those reasons I support free school meals for all in Hawai'i.

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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 Network

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: January 14, 2025

To: Councilmember Matt Weyer, Chair
Councilmember Radiant Cordero, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Housing, Sustainability, Economy & Health

Re: Support for Res 25-002 URGING THE HAWAI'I STATE LEGISLATURE TO ADOPT LEGISLATION THAT WOULD CREATE A UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

Mtg: Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at 1:00 PM

Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)[1] is in support of Res 25-002, which would urge the state legislature to establish a universal free school meals program that promotes nutritional equity, supports local agriculture, and enhances student success.

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 need 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 130% of the federal poverty line require support but are not getting it.[2] Families of 4 earning just $47,000 per year are not eligible for free school meals but earn less than half of the $110,000 that is needed to make ends meet.[3] These Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) families do not qualify for free lunches despite having significant needs. 1 in 3 Hawai'i

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[1] Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships , and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.
[2] https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/HealthAndNutrition/StudentHealthResources/Pages/FreeReducedLunch.aspx
[3] https://unitedforalice.org/hawaii

households are part of the ALICE population who need increased support.[4] The arbitrary cut-off at 130% of the federal poverty level hurts children and does not accurately reflect the needs of our local families.

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.

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.[5] Evidence shows that free school meals programs result in increased test scores.[6] Every child should know that when in school, they will eat.

Thank you for considering this important resolution, and our testimony in support of free school meals.

Mahalo,



Nate Hix
Director of Policy and Advocacy
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

[4] https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/case-universal-free-meals-all-permanent-solution
[5] https://apnews.com/article/free-school-meals-0c927f491b2ee9d4ce7e04b44da79e51
[6] 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/