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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 26, 2024

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

Re: HB 2430 HD1 Relating to Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children Program

Hrg: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 2:00 PM

Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Institute[i] appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **Support of HB2430 HD1**, which would provide Hawai'i families with the opportunity to participate in the Summer EBT program.

This measure calls for the collaboration between the Department of Education, which directly provides for the students, and the Department of Human Services, which adminsiters SNAP. It is vital the departments have a strong working relationship and endeavor to work seamlessly together to best provide meals to our youth. Success will be achieved through collaboration.

School ends and hunger persists.
Low-income families are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals during the school year to help with the cost of food. However, these guaranteed meals are no longer available during the summer. This loss leaves many students facing food insecurity. Fortunately, the federal government is offering to provide families with hundreds of dollars per child so they can afford healthy meals, and Hawai'i has the opportunity to provide for its students. By participating in the Summer EBT program and facilitating local families' enrollment, Hawai'i can redirect millions of federal dollars toward groceries for these families and will help end the hunger that plagues 1 in 5 children in Hawai'i.[ii]

Healthy meals mean healthy keiki.
Adopting the Summer EBT Program is a pivotal step towards enhancing our children's health. Ensuring access to nutritious food during summer, we combat food insecurity and its associated health risks, like stress, depression, and other chronic diseases.[iii] This promotes immediate health outcomes for our keiki and creates lifelong healthy eating habits. These students and our state will feel the benefits of this program long after the summer ends.

Economic boost to Hawai‘i.
Implementing this program is simply the right thing to do and a strategic economic investment. By providing families with additional federal funds to purchase nutritious food, we directly inject millions of dollars into our local economies, supporting grocers, farmers, and businesses. Studies have shown that every dollar in SNAP benefits generates up to $1.50 in economic activity.[iv] The summer EBT program would have a similar effect here in Hawai‘i.

Mahalo to the committee for taking up such an important measure. It is imperative we all work together to end childhood hunger throughout Hawai‘i.

Please consider our testimony in support of HB2430 and pass this bill.

Sincerely,



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

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[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://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/child/hawaii
[iii] https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/what-are-the-implications-of-food-insecurity-for-health-and-health-care/
[iv] https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/93529/err265_summary.pdf