

JAN 17 2025

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 Act 175, Session
2 Laws of Hawaii 2021, established a target goal of thirty per
3 cent of food served in public schools to consist of locally
4 sourced products by 2030 to support the health and well-being of
5 Hawaii's students. Plant-based diets are proven to reduce the
6 chances of developing diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and
7 various forms of cancer, among other chronic conditions.

8 Further, offering vegetarian meals can also greatly increase
9 demand for local greens and promote local farming jobs and
10 agriculture. Providing vegetarian meals to students can also
11 promote a healthy lifestyle for the State's youth while
12 encouraging personal environmentally conscious decision-making.

13 The legislature notes that certain students go hungry when
14 no plant-based option is available to accommodate their dietary
15 needs. In testimony on House Bill No. 2083, H.D. 3, S.D. 1
16 (2024), students who follow plant-based diets testified that the
17 limited availability of plant-based meals impacts their academic



1 performance, social-emotional health, and physical well-being.
2 Further, students testified that while they pay for the whole
3 school lunch, students with plant-based diets often rely on
4 teachers or peers to supplement school meals. Offering expanded
5 school meal choices, including plant-based meals, will ensure
6 that all students receive adequate nutrition throughout the
7 school day.

8 The legislature further finds that hundreds of school
9 districts across the country offer plant-based alternatives in
10 response to the growing demand for more culturally appropriate
11 and vegan options. Pursuant to United States Department of
12 Agriculture guidelines, substitutes for milk are acceptable,
13 which allows for flexibility in meeting nutritional requirements
14 while accommodating dietary preferences and restrictions.
15 Additionally, the United States Department of Agriculture
16 encourages schools to plan and serve culturally inclusive meals
17 for their students, which is an important part of nutrition
18 equity. For example, schools serving primarily American Indian
19 and Alaska Native children are able to serve vegetables such as
20 breadfruit, prairie turnips, yams, plantains, or sweet potatoes
21 to meet the grains requirement. The flexibility to serve



1 vegetables to meet the grains requirement is also extended to
2 all schools, sponsors, institutions, and facilities in Guam and
3 Hawaii. Finally, schools are also encouraged to offer
4 traditional indigenous foods in school meals that resemble meals
5 typically eaten with family.

6 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 7 (1) Establish a recognition program for department of
8 education schools that commit to and achieve the local
9 farm to school meal goals set forth in Act 175,
10 Session Laws of Hawaii 2021; and
11 (2) Require department of education high schools to
12 provide a plant-based meal option.

13 SECTION 2. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
14 amended by adding two new sections to part II, subpart C, to be
15 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

16 **"§302A- Farm to school meals; recognition program. (a)**

17 The department shall establish a recognition program to
18 incentivize individual public schools to submit to the
19 department a plan for the school to reach the local farm to
20 school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school



1 to consist of locally sourced products by 2030, established
2 pursuant to section 302A-405.6.

3 (b) The department shall establish guidelines for the
4 recognition program, including what incentives to award to
5 schools that commit to and reach the local farm to school meal
6 goals.

7 **§302A- School meals; plant-based options.** (a) The
8 department shall require all department high schools to provide
9 a plant-based meal as an option under the school meals program.

10 (b) The department high school may establish a day within
11 the school week to exclusively provide plant-based meal options
12 for school meals.

13 (c) Department high schools shall establish individual
14 guidelines, with the approval of the department, that
15 incorporate nutritional guidelines, menu planning, and staffing
16 to effectuate the purposes of this section."

17 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

18 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

19 INTRODUCED BY: 



S.B. NO. 549

Report Title:

DOE; Farm to School Meals; Recognition Program; High Schools;
School Meals; Plant-Based Option

Description:

Requires the Department of Education to establish a recognition program to incentivize schools to submit to the Department a plan for the school to reach the local farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030. Requires all department high schools to provide a plant-based meal option for school meals, under certain conditions.

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