

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE FOOD HUB PILOT PROGRAM.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the State's
2 overwhelming reliance on imported food poses a significant risk
3 to the State's food security, economic stability, and community
4 health. The COVID-19 pandemic, combined with recent federal
5 cuts to agricultural and nutrition programs, has revealed
6 vulnerabilities in the State's food system, particularly for
7 small farmers and low-income families.

8 The legislature further finds that community-based food
9 hubs, such as those supported under Act 313, Session Laws of
10 Hawaii 2022, have demonstrated measurable success in
11 strengthening local food networks by connecting the State's
12 farmers directly to consumers, schools, and institutions.
13 However, there remains a critical policy gap in integrating
14 these food hubs with community health systems and public
15 education institutions to promote not only access to food, but
16 also long-term public health and nutrition outcomes.



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1 The legislature recognizes the success of local
2 community-based organizations that unite health care, education,
3 and agriculture through place-based food operations. These
4 organizations demonstrate that food can be medicine, thereby
5 improving community health while empowering local farmers and
6 strengthening aina-based practices. The legislature also finds
7 that organizations that aggregate and distribute culturally
8 significant crops, such as ulu, have become a cornerstone in
9 local food system development. Despite recent federal funding
10 losses, these organizations continue to build market access for
11 local farmers and connect ulu-based foods to schools, hospitals,
12 and consumers statewide.

13 The purpose of this Act is to:

- 14 (1) Require the department of education, department of
15 health, department of corrections and rehabilitation,
16 department of defense, and university of Hawaii to
17 ensure that thirty per cent of the produce purchased
18 by each department consists of fresh local
19 agricultural products or local value-added, processed,
20 agricultural, or food products by January 1, 2028;



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1 (2) Require the department of agriculture and biosecurity
2 to develop a nutrition- and aina-based program for
3 integration into public school curricula;

4 (3) Expand access to Native Hawaiian crops by requiring
5 the department of agriculture and biosecurity to
6 partner with a local aggregator to support the
7 aggregation and processing of Native Hawaiian staple
8 crops; and

9 (4) Require the department of agriculture and biosecurity
10 to prioritize an organization meeting certain
11 requirements for grant funding.

12 SECTION 2. Section 27-8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
13 amended by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

14 "(a) The department of education, department of health,
15 department of corrections and rehabilitation, department of
16 defense, and university of Hawaii system shall each ensure that
17 a certain percentage of the food purchased for public schools,
18 youth campuses, public hospitals, public prisons, and any
19 purchases made directly by the university of Hawaii for use in
20 its academic programs, as applicable, is fresh local



1 agricultural products and local value-added, processed,
2 agricultural, or food products, as follows:

3 (1) By January 1, 2025, fresh local agricultural products
4 and local value-added, processed, agricultural, or
5 food products shall constitute a minimum of ten per
6 cent of the total food purchased during each calendar
7 year, as measured by the per cent of total food cost;
8 provided that the department of education shall be
9 exempt from the requirements of this paragraph;

10 (2) By January 1, ~~[2030,]~~ 2028, fresh local agricultural
11 products and local value-added, processed,
12 agricultural, or food products shall constitute a
13 minimum of ~~[eighteen]~~ thirty per cent of the total
14 food purchased during each calendar year, as measured
15 by the per cent of total food cost; ~~[provided that the~~
16 ~~department of education shall be exempt from the~~
17 ~~requirements of this paragraph and instead shall be~~
18 ~~subject to the requirements in section 302A-405.6(a),~~

19 ~~(3) By January 1, 2035, fresh local agricultural products~~
20 ~~and local value-added, processed, agricultural, or~~
21 ~~food products shall constitute a minimum of twenty-six~~



1 ~~per cent of the total food purchased during each~~
2 ~~calendar year, as measured by the per cent of total~~
3 ~~food cost; provided that the department of education~~
4 ~~shall be exempt from the requirements of this~~
5 ~~paragraph.]~~

6 ~~[(4)]~~ (3) By January 1, 2040, fresh local agricultural
7 products and local value-added, processed,
8 agricultural, or food products shall constitute a
9 minimum of thirty-four per cent of the total food
10 purchased during each calendar year, as measured by
11 the per cent of total food cost;

12 ~~[(5)]~~ (4) By January 1, 2045, fresh local agricultural
13 products and local value-added, processed,
14 agricultural, or food products shall constitute a
15 minimum of forty-two per cent of the total food
16 purchased during each calendar year, as measured by
17 the per cent of total food cost; and

18 ~~[(6)]~~ (5) By January 1, 2050, fresh local agricultural
19 products and local value-added, processed,
20 agricultural, or food products shall constitute a
21 minimum of fifty per cent of the total food purchased



1 during each calendar year, as measured by the per cent
2 of total food cost."

3 SECTION 3. Section 302A-405.6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
4 amended by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

5 "(a) The department shall ensure that by January 1,
6 [~~2030~~,] 2028, fresh local agricultural products and local
7 value-added processed, agricultural, or food products shall
8 constitute a minimum of thirty per cent of the total food
9 purchased during each calendar year, as measured by the per cent
10 of total food cost."

11 SECTION 4. Act 313, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022, is
12 amended by amending section 2 to read as follows:

13 "SECTION 2. (a) There is established a five-year food hub
14 pilot program, which shall be administered by the department of
15 agriculture[~~-~~] and biosecurity.

16 (b) The food hub pilot program shall:

17 (1) Adopt the United States Department of Agriculture's
18 working definition of "food hub", which means "a
19 centrally located facility with a business management
20 structure facilitating the aggregation, storage,



- 1 processing, distribution, and/or marketing of
- 2 locally/regionally produced food products"; ~~and~~
- 3 (2) Award grant funding to qualified applicants for the
- 4 construction of critical infrastructure to establish
- 5 and expand food hubs in each of the counties,
- 6 including:
- 7 (A) Construction or improvement of facilities for
- 8 aggregation, washing, minimal processing,
- 9 packaging, cold storage, and other
- 10 value-additions; and
- 11 (B) Provision of technical assistance to develop
- 12 in-state capacity to supply state institutions
- 13 ~~and~~, community organizations, and other
- 14 markets[-];
- 15 (3) Develop a nutrition- and aina-based education program
- 16 for integration in public school curricula that
- 17 utilizes locally sourced ingredients and teaches
- 18 traditional food cultivation and preparation methods;
- 19 (4) Collect data on local procurement, community health,
- 20 and economic outcomes; and



1 (5) Partner with a regional aggregator supporting local
2 procurement to:

3 (A) Support aggregation, processing, and value-added
4 production of ulu and other Native Hawaiian
5 staple crops;

6 (B) Facilitate farm-to-school and farm-to-hospital
7 procurement pipelines; and

8 (C) Expand access to fresh, local, and cultural
9 significant foods across the island.

10 (c) The department of agriculture and biosecurity shall
11 establish criteria for the award of initial start-up grant
12 funding or subsequent expansion funding under the food hub pilot
13 program, including the following provisions:

14 (1) Priority shall be given to [~~organizations~~]:

15 (A) An organization capable of leveraging existing
16 infrastructure to demonstrate:

17 (i) The direct links between food hub
18 distribution and health care and community
19 wellness plans;



(ii) The educational benefits of integrating an
aina-based learning program into a
department of education school; and

(iii) The economic and social benefits of
localized food systems for producers and
consumers; and

(B) Organizations having demonstrated experience in
aggregation, washing, minimal processing,
packaging, cold storage, and other
value-additions for delivering local produce to
local markets;

(2) Qualifying applicants shall include corporations,
limited liability companies, partnerships, sole
proprietorships, non-profit organizations, and
agricultural cooperatives that meet necessary
insurance requirements and provide a certificate of
vendor compliance with Hawaii compliance express;

(3) Applicants seeking to establish a new food hub where
none currently exist shall first secure a physical
location for the food hub and draft a detailed plan
for the food hub's operation, including activities in



1 which the applicant intends to engage, such as serving
2 as a marketplace for buying and selling, or providing
3 certified kitchen space in which multiple farmers may
4 share use of facilities for value-added product
5 development; and

6 (4) Applicants shall explain their intended actions to
7 increase access to locally produced food.

8 (d) The department of agriculture and biosecurity shall
9 require that the receipt of grant funding pursuant to the food
10 hub pilot program be conditioned upon the recipient's compliance
11 with all applicable state and federal food safety laws, rules,
12 and regulations, including the FDA Food Safety Modernization
13 Act, P.L. 111-353, and that Act's provisions on supplier
14 verification.

15 (e) The department of agriculture and biosecurity shall
16 adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, for
17 the administration and operation of the food hub pilot program.

18 (f) The food hub pilot program under this section shall
19 terminate on June 30, 2027.

20 (g) The department of agriculture and biosecurity shall
21 submit a report on the progress and outcomes of the food hub



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1 pilot program to the legislature no later than twenty days prior
2 to the convening of the regular session of 2027."

3 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$5,000,000 or so much
5 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the
6 continued implementation of the food hub pilot program
7 established pursuant to Act 313, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022,
8 including the awarding of grant moneys to qualifying food hubs.

9 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
10 agriculture and biosecurity for the purposes of this Act.

11 SECTION 6. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
12 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

13 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

14
INTRODUCED BY: Mike Gabbard



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Report Title:

DAB; Procurement; Produce Contracts; Local Produce; Specifications; Food Hub Pilot Program; Grant Funding; Report; Appropriation

Description:

Beginning January 1, 2028, requires the Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Department of Defense, and University of Hawaii to ensure that thirty percent of the produce purchased by that department consists of fresh local agricultural products or local value-added, processed, agricultural, or food products. Requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to develop a nutrition- and aina-based program for integration into public school curricular. Requires DAB to partner with a regional aggregator to support the aggregation and processing of Native Hawaiian staple crops, facilitate procurement pipelines, and expand access to Native Hawaiian crops. Requires DAB to prioritize grants for an organization that meets certain requirements. Requires a report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

