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# HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY TO JOINTLY DEVELOP A FARMER-TO-INSTITUTION COORDINATION PLAN THAT IS ALIGNED WITH THE AINA KITCHEN NETWORK ROLLOUT.

1           WHEREAS, Act 175, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021, requires the  
2 Department of Education to source thirty percent of school meal  
3 ingredients from local producers by 2030; and  
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5           WHEREAS, in the school year 2023-2024, the Department of  
6 Education achieved only 5.43 percent local food procurement,  
7 which is less than one-fifth of the thirty percent target, with  
8 only four school years remaining before the 2030 deadline; and  
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10           WHEREAS, Auditor's Report No. 26-08 found systemic failures  
11 in the Department of Education's approach to local food  
12 procurement including the absence of centralized tracking  
13 software, inconsistent identification of locally sourced  
14 products, and discrepancies between internal and reported food  
15 cost figures; and  
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17           WHEREAS, the audit further found that schools left  
18 approximately \$1,000,000 in federal Fresh Fruit and Vegetable  
19 Program funds unspent in the 2023-2024 school year and an  
20 additional \$913,000 unspent in 2024-2025, representing nearly  
21 \$2,000,000 in available federal funding specifically designated  
22 for local produce that was not utilized; and  
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24           WHEREAS, the Department of Education broke ground in  
25 January 2026 on the first facility of the "AINA Kitchen Network"  
26 in Whitmore Village; this facility will be co-located on a  
27 thirty-four-acre parcel with the "Central O'ahu Agriculture and  
28 Food Hub" managed by the Agribusiness Development Corporation,  
29 which is designed to support local farmers through aggregation,  
30 processing, storage, and distribution of locally produced foods,  
31 is the first of seven planned regional kitchens statewide, and



1 is anticipated to begin serving meals to schools in the  
2 Leilehua-Mililani-Waiialua Complex Area in fall 2027; and

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4 WHEREAS, the state audit found that the Department of  
5 Education's AINA regional kitchen network plans lack details and  
6 any formal joint plan between the Department of Education and  
7 Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to coordinate farmer  
8 capacity-building with the kitchen network's phased demand  
9 requirements; and

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11 WHEREAS, local farmers face significant barriers to scaling  
12 production for institutional markets, including the fact that  
13 eighty percent of Hawaii's more than 7,300 farms earn less than  
14 \$25,000 annually, the State lost 82,000 acres of farmland and  
15 over seven hundred farms between 2017 and 2022, and farmers  
16 require long-term contract certainty to justify investment in  
17 the land, labor, and infrastructure needed to produce at  
18 institutional scale; and

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20 WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity  
21 lacks the staffing and funding necessary to assist farmers in  
22 scaling operations to meet institutional demand; and

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24 WHEREAS, the Governor's budget for fiscal year 2026-2027  
25 denied the Department of Education's request for thirteen farm-  
26 to-school positions and nearly \$1,500,000 in additional food  
27 funding, and federal funding cuts have placed an estimated  
28 \$64,000,000 to \$175,000,000 at risk for Hawaii's food system;  
29 and

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31 WHEREAS, Act 239, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, established  
32 the Interagency Food Systems Working Group to coordinate  
33 statewide food systems planning, and the AINA Kitchen Network  
34 represents the single largest state investment in local food  
35 infrastructure in Hawaii's history, making it critical that a  
36 coordinated farmer supply strategy accompany the construction  
37 timeline; and

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39 WHEREAS, the State has recently started the Nourishing  
40 Hawai'i's Future Initiative, with the aim of increasing local  
41 food production and creating locally sourced meals for students  
42 through regional kitchens; and



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WHEREAS, although procurement reforms, such as raising the small purchase threshold for the purchase of local edible produce and packaged food products through Act 134, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, will help the Department of Education purchase from smaller local farmers, procurement reform alone cannot close the gap between institutional demand and local production capacity without a deliberate, coordinated plan to help farmers identify, grow, and deliver the crops that the AINA Kitchen Network will need at each phase of its rollout; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Thirty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026, that the Department of Education and Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, in consultation with the Interagency Food Systems Working Group established under Act 239, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, Agribusiness Development Corporation, and Hawaii Farm Bureau, are urged to jointly develop a Farmer-to-Institution Coordination Plan aligned with the phased rollout of the AINA Kitchen Network; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Farmer-to-Institution Coordination Plan include:

- (1) Identification of the specific crops, proteins, and value-added products the AINA Kitchen Network will require at each phase of construction;
- (2) An assessment of current local production capacity for those items and the gap between current supply and projected institutional demand;
- (3) A farmer capacity-building strategy identifying the land, infrastructure, workforce development, and technical assistance needed to close that gap;
- (4) A procurement contract structure that provides farmers with the multi-year certainty necessary to invest in scaling their operations;
- (5) A timeline with measurable milestones aligned with each phase of the AINA Kitchen Network rollout; and



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(6) A proposal to implement a centralized, digital system, to replace the current reliance on handwritten records, for tracking local food procurement across schools statewide, with the capabilities of:

(A) Identifying which products are locally sourced;

(B) Tracking spending at the school and complex area level; and

(C) Producing data sufficient for independent verification of the Department of Education's annual progress reports in meeting the goals of sourcing school meal ingredients from local producers to the Legislature; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Department of Education and Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity are requested to ensure that the Farmer-to-Institution Coordination Plan is complementary to the Nourishing Hawai'i's Future Initiative; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education is requested to take immediate steps to ensure full utilization of all available federal funding for local produce procurement, including the federal Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education and Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity are requested to jointly submit to the Legislature, no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2027, the Farmer-to-Institution Coordination Plan, including any findings, recommendations, proposed legislation, and the amount of federal local food funding received, expended, and unexpended for school year 2026-2027; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of Education, Superintendent of Education, Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Executive Director of the Agribusiness Development Corporation, and President of the Hawaii Farm Bureau.

