

MAR 16 2026

SENATE CONCURRENT 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,



1 processing, storage, and distribution of locally produced foods,
2 is the first of seven planned regional kitchens statewide, and
3 is anticipated to begin serving meals to schools in the
4 Leilehua-Mililani-Waialua Complex Area in fall 2027; and

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

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

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

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26 WHEREAS, the Governor's budget for fiscal year 2026-2027
27 denied the Department of Education's request for thirteen farm-
28 to-school positions and nearly \$1,500,000 in additional food
29 funding, and federal funding cuts have placed an estimated
30 \$64,000,000 to \$175,000,000 at risk for Hawaii's food system;
31 and

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

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41 WHEREAS, although procurement reforms, such as raising the
42 small purchase threshold for the purchase of local edible



1 produce and packaged food products through Act 134, Session Laws
2 of Hawaii 2025, will help the Department of Education purchase
3 from smaller local farmers, procurement reform alone cannot
4 close the gap between institutional demand and local production
5 capacity without a deliberate, coordinated plan to help farmers
6 identify, grow, and deliver the crops that the AINA Kitchen
7 Network will need at each phase of its rollout; now, therefore,
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9 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
10 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026, the
11 House of Representatives concurring, that the Department of
12 Education and Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, in
13 consultation with the Interagency Food Systems Working Group
14 established under Act 239, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025,
15 Agribusiness Development Corporation, and Hawaii Farm Bureau,
16 are urged to jointly develop a Farmer-to-Institution
17 Coordination Plan aligned with the phased rollout of the AINA
18 Kitchen Network; and
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20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Farmer-to-Institution
21 Coordination Plan include:
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- 23 (1) Identification of the specific crops, proteins, and
24 value-added products the AINA Kitchen Network will
25 require at each phase of construction;
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- 27 (2) An assessment of current local production capacity for
28 those items and the gap between current supply and
29 projected institutional demand;
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- 31 (3) A farmer capacity-building strategy identifying the
32 land, infrastructure, workforce development, and
33 technical assistance needed to close that gap;
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- 35 (4) A procurement contract structure that provides farmers
36 with the multi-year certainty necessary to invest in
37 scaling their operations;
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- 39 (5) A timeline with measurable milestones aligned with
40 each phase of the AINA Kitchen Network rollout; and
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1 (6) A proposal to implement a centralized, digital system,
2 to replace the current reliance on handwritten
3 records, for tracking local food procurement across
4 schools statewide, with the capabilities of:

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6 (A) Identifying which products are locally sourced;

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

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11 (C) Producing data sufficient for independent
12 verification of the Department of Education's
13 annual progress reports in meeting the goals of
14 sourcing school meal ingredients from local
15 producers to the Legislature; and
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17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education is
18 requested to take immediate steps to ensure full utilization of
19 all available federal funding for local produce procurement,
20 including the federal Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program; and
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22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education and
23 Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity are requested to
24 jointly submit to the Legislature, no later than twenty days
25 prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2027, the
26 Farmer-to-Institution Coordination Plan, including any findings,
27 recommendations, proposed legislation, and the amount of federal
28 local food funding received, expended, and unexpended for school
29 year 2026-2027; and
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31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
32 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the
33 Board of Education, Superintendent of Education, Chairperson of
34 the Board of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Executive Director of
35 the Agribusiness Development Corporation, and President of the
36 Hawaii Farm Bureau.
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OFFERED BY: Mike Gabbard

