

MAR 16 2026

SENATE 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
4

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
9

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
16

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
23

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-Waialua Complex Area in fall 2027; and
3

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
10

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
19

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
23

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
30

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
38

39 WHEREAS, although procurement reforms, such as raising the
40 small purchase threshold for the purchase of local edible
41 produce and packaged food products through Act 134, Session Laws
42 of Hawaii 2025, will help the Department of Education purchase



1 from smaller local farmers, procurement reform alone cannot
2 close the gap between institutional demand and local production
3 capacity without a deliberate, coordinated plan to help farmers
4 identify, grow, and deliver the crops that the AINA Kitchen
5 Network will need at each phase of its rollout; now, therefore,
6

7 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
8 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026,
9 that the Department of Education and Department of Agriculture
10 and Biosecurity, in consultation with the Interagency Food
11 Systems Working Group established under Act 239, Session Laws of
12 Hawaii 2025, Agribusiness Development Corporation, and Hawaii
13 Farm Bureau, are urged to jointly develop a Farmer-to-
14 Institution Coordination Plan aligned with the phased rollout of
15 the AINA Kitchen Network; and
16

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Farmer-to-Institution
18 Coordination Plan include:
19

- 20 (1) Identification of the specific crops, proteins, and
21 value-added products the AINA Kitchen Network will
22 require at each phase of construction;
23
- 24 (2) An assessment of current local production capacity for
25 those items and the gap between current supply and
26 projected institutional demand;
27
- 28 (3) A farmer capacity-building strategy identifying the
29 land, infrastructure, workforce development, and
30 technical assistance needed to close that gap;
31
- 32 (4) A procurement contract structure that provides farmers
33 with the multi-year certainty necessary to invest in
34 scaling their operations;
35
- 36 (5) A timeline with measurable milestones aligned with
37 each phase of the AINA Kitchen Network rollout; and
38
- 39 (6) A proposal to implement a centralized, digital system,
40 to replace the current reliance on handwritten
41 records, for tracking local food procurement across
42 schools statewide, with the capabilities of:



- 1
2 (A) Identifying which products are locally sourced;
3
4 (B) Tracking spending at the school and complex area
5 level; and
6
7 (C) Producing data sufficient for independent
8 verification of the Department of Education's
9 annual progress reports in meeting the goals of
10 sourcing school meal ingredients from local
11 producers to the Legislature; and
12

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education is
14 requested to take immediate steps to ensure full utilization of
15 all available federal funding for local produce procurement,
16 including the federal Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program; and
17

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education and
19 Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity are requested to
20 jointly submit to the Legislature, no later than twenty days
21 prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2027, the
22 Farmer-to-Institution Coordination Plan, including any findings,
23 recommendations, proposed legislation, and the amount of federal
24 local food funding received, expended, and unexpended for school
25 year 2026-2027; and
26

27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
28 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of
29 Education, Superintendent of Education, Chairperson of the Board
30 of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Executive Director of the
31 Agribusiness Development Corporation, and President of the
32 Hawaii Farm Bureau.
33
34
35

OFFERED BY: Mike Labb

