



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

March 31, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

TESTIMONY ON HCR 94 & HR 86

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

Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HCR 94 and HR 86, which urges the Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to jointly develop a farmer-to-institution coordination plan aligned with the rollout of the AINA Kitchen Network.

Hawai'i has set an ambitious goal to source thirty percent of school meal ingredients locally by 2030, yet current procurement remains significantly below that target. As noted in the resolution, the Department of Education achieved only approximately 5.4 percent local procurement in the 2023–2024 school year, highlighting the gap that still needs to be addressed.

HFB agrees that increasing local food procurement requires more than procurement policy changes alone. Farmers need clear market signals, long-term contract certainty, and coordinated support to scale production to meet institutional demand. Without a coordinated approach, it will be difficult for local producers to align planting, harvesting, and investment decisions with the needs of large-scale institutional buyers such as the Department of Education.

HFB also recognizes that there are ongoing efforts, such as the Nourishing Hawai'i Future initiative, that are already working to strengthen connections between local producers and

institutional markets. We view these efforts as complementary and believe they can help inform and support the development of the coordination plan envisioned in this resolution. Aligning and building upon existing initiatives will be important to avoid duplication and maximize impact.

We strongly support the development of a coordinated plan that identifies specific product needs, assesses production capacity, and outlines a strategy to build farmer capacity over time. The inclusion of multi-year procurement structures is particularly important, as farmers require predictability to make investments in land, labor, and infrastructure.

We also support efforts to improve data tracking and transparency in local food procurement. A centralized system to accurately track locally sourced products and spending will help ensure accountability and better inform future policy decisions.

As this effort moves forward, HFB encourages continued coordination with the agricultural community to ensure that the plan is practical, achievable, and reflective of on-the-ground conditions. Aligning production capacity with the phased rollout of the AINA Kitchen Network will be critical to the long-term success of this initiative.

HFB appreciates being included as a stakeholder in this process and looks forward to working with the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, and other partners to strengthen Hawai'i's local food system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 |
Honolulu, HI 96813
P: 808-533-1292 | e:
info@hawaiiifood.com

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TO: Committee on Education
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: March 31, 2026
TIME: 2pm

RE: HR86 HCR94 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.

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure. Institutional purchasing can be a powerful tool in growing our local agricultural sector. This provides local farmers with consistent buyers who they can work with to maximize local production and economic viability. Developing a Farmer-to-Institution Coordination Plan aligned with the phased rollout of the AINA Kitchen Network can help enable institutional purchasing. This will also help ensure that our local keiki are able to enjoy fresh local food. We urge the Committee to pass the measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



HAWAII APPLESEED
CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Support for HR 86/HCR 94 – Urging Departments to Jointly Develop a Farmer-To-Institution Coordination Plan Aligned with the ‘Aina Kitchen Network Rollout

House Committee on Education
Tuesday, March 31, 2026, 2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HR 86/HCR 94**, which urge the Hawai‘i Department of Education (HIDOE) and Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to jointly develop a “*Farmer-to-Institution Coordination Plan*,” to guide the rollout of the state’s much anticipated regional kitchen initiative.

Hawai‘i Appleseed has long been a supporter of the HIDOE’s school meals program, understanding that school meals are a critical service for both children who are hungry as well as for parents and caregivers, many of whom are struggling to afford enough groceries to feed their families. We also have been staunch supporters of any initiatives that strengthen our local food system by ensuring that these programs utilize locally grown products to the greatest degree possible.

The regional kitchen model holds great promise, but advocates and the public have seen little in the way of a plan for how these kitchens will operate. This was corroborated by the recent Audit of the HIDOE’s farm to school efforts.¹ The audit also found that the Department has not been using allocated federal funding intended for the purchase of locally grown produce, and lacks an adequate plan to achieve its benchmark farm to school goals.

This audit brings to light serious concerns about the viability of the regional kitchen initiative. At a time when nearly one in three households in Hawai‘i is experiencing food insecurity, the need for coordinated, strategic action has never been more urgent. With the first kitchen in Wahiawa anticipated to be operational and serving meals by Fall 2027, it is critical that the state has a detailed plan to ensure there are no interruptions to procurement, preparations, or compliance that may ultimately result in food shortages for students. A Farmer-to-Institution Coordination Plan—as described in this resolution—would help bring together farmers, agencies, and the appropriate stakeholders now to facilitate better outcomes for both students and farmers than we’ve seen so far.

Building a resilient, local food system is an act of economic justice. It supports our working farmers, protects our environment, and feeds our future. We cannot afford to reach 2030 and realize we missed our targets due to a lack of inter-agency communication.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to adopt this resolution, making a bold statement about the importance of ensuring that food security is treated as a fundamental priority for our state.

¹ Office of the Auditor, State of Hawai‘i, *Audit of the Department of Education’s Efforts to Meet Its Mandate to Incorporate Local Foods in School Meals*, [Report No. 26-08](#) (March 2026).

The Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice advocates for economic justice for and with Hawai'i's people. We envision a Hawai'i that puts its people first—where everyone can meet their basic needs while living happy, healthy and creative lives.

HR-86

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 9:35:43 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/31/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Denise Yamaguchi	Hawaii Agricultural Foundation	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.C.R. NO. 94, HD1
RELATING TO FARM-TO-INSTITUTION COORDINATION**

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Denise Yamaguchi, and I serve as CEO of the Hawai‘i Ag & Culinary Alliance and Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Agricultural Foundation. I am writing in support of this resolution in concept.

We appreciate the intent of this resolution to strengthen coordination between the Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, particularly as it relates to aligning local agricultural production with the rollout of the AINA Kitchen Network. The need to better connect institutional demand with local supply is both timely and important, especially as the State works toward its goal of sourcing 30% of school meal ingredients locally by 2030—a goal that will require thoughtful planning and strong collaboration to achieve.

We also strongly support the resolution’s focus on identifying key commodities, assessing production gaps, supporting farmer capacity-building, improving procurement systems, and ensuring full utilization of available federal funding. These are all critical components of a successful farm-to-institution system.

At the same time, we would like to respectfully share that **many of the elements outlined in this resolution are already being actively worked on.**

Over the past several years, significant progress has been made through existing efforts, including:

- The Interagency Food Systems Working Group,
- The Central O‘ahu Regional Kitchen planning process,
- Ongoing coordination between DOE, CTAHR, HDOA DOH, and community partners like HAF and the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation,
- Farm to School planning efforts, including recent action plans and menu development work tied to regional kitchens.

These efforts have already begun to lay the foundation for the type of coordination this resolution envisions, including identifying priority commodities, assessing capacity, and aligning supply with future institutional demand.

As such, we offer a recommendation that this measure **build upon and elevate the work already in motion**, helping to align and accelerate these efforts rather than unintentionally duplicating them. By doing so, the State can maintain momentum while ensuring clarity in roles, responsibilities, and accountability.

We believe Hawai'i is at an important inflection point—where the focus is shifting from planning to implementation. Continued alignment across agencies and partners will be key to successfully scaling local agriculture to meet institutional needs.

We support the intent of this measure and the outcomes it seeks to achieve. We look forward to continued collaboration with the State and our partners to help move this important work forward in a coordinated and effective way.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Denise Yamaguchi, Executive Director, Hawaii Agricultural Foundation, CEO Hawaii Ag & Culinary Alliance