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February 24, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
Committee on Finance

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Interim Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 1380, H.D. 2 - RELATING TO HAWAII-GROWN PRODUCE**

Hearing: Thursday, February 24, 2011; 11:30 a.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to establish the farm-to-school program in the Department of Agriculture to increase the procurement of locally-grown fruits and vegetables. This bill would establish the Hawaii-grown fresh fruit and vegetable program and appropriate funds for the program to increase school children's access to Hawaii produce. It also requires the Department of Human Services to establish the farmers to food banks pilot program with Hawaii farmers to provide Hawaii-grown produce to low-income people through designated food banks.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill. The Department, however, has no experience or expertise in the actual production or distribution of food as would required by Section 2 of this bill which establishes the farmers to food banks pilot program.

DHS recommends that administration of the farmers to food banks pilot program in Section 2 of this bill be placed in an agency that that has a more agricultural base and has more experience working with Hawaii farmers and the Hawaii food banks.

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The Department of Human Services is responsible for determining eligibility and issuing benefits for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. The SNAP provides low-income households with electronic benefits they can use like cash at most grocery stores to purchase food and maintain a healthy diet.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.