

Date: 02/07/2011

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 0198 RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.
Education; School Meals Program

Purpose of Bill: Authorizes schools to purchase fresh local produce under the school meals program and to grow food in school gardens for consumption in the school lunch program.

Department's Position: Section 1 of the bill authorizes schools to grow food in their gardens for consumption in their school meals program. While the Department of Education (DOE) supports school garden initiatives for curriculum, we need to point out that DOE will not be able to use produce harvested from school gardens in the National School Lunch Program unless the garden has food safety certification from the State Department of Agriculture. Students may consume produce grown on campus, but not in the school lunch program unless the garden has food safety certification.

Section 2 of the bill authorizes schools to purchase local produce. DOE has the ability to purchase local produce and believes this bill is not necessary.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



Dean J. Okimoto
President, Nalo Farms, Inc.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

February 07, 2011 2:00PM

HB 198

Authorizing Schools to purchase Fresh Local Produce

Chair Takumi and Members of the Committee:

I have been a farmer for 28 years in Waimanalo and have sold produce to over 100 restaurants, hotels, and retail stores over that time. We have been food safety certified by Primus labs for the past three years, and while I commend the legislature for trying to increase the amount of local foods that go into our school system to our children, I have some concerns about this bill, but I do support the intent.

I am all for the teaching of our children how to grow produce, as we do need to develop more farmers going forward, and I am even in favor of the schools being able to purchase the produce that is generated from school gardens, but my concern is liability and food safety.

If we are to teach our children all the correct things to do, these gardens should be food safety certified, and it should be the protocol to teach our children, that we grow things with the health and safety in mind, of the people who eat our products

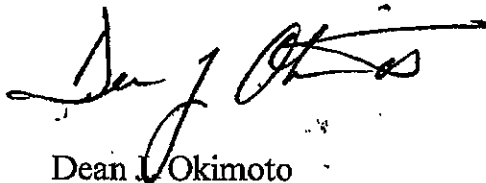
There is nothing in this bill that addresses food safety and although it is not mandated by law yet, it is a major concern of mine to be feeding our children food that the proper precautions have not been part of the process. We have had people become very sick from the rat lung worm disease over the past few months, and it is carried by slugs which we have in the islands. I would want the State to be cognizant of the fact that this is being eaten by our children and we would want to serve them the safest, best food that we can produce.

Schools can NOT purchase from sources that are not food safety certified because of the fact that it is for children. Besides which, if asked, would you purchase food that is food safety certified over food that is NOT? what would be your answer?

The liability factor is another thing to be considered. If you serve food grown on state property and it is not food safety certified, the liability to the state and school would be a huge factor.

Thank you for letting me submit this testimony, I am sorry will not be able to attend the hearing, but if there are any questions please do not hesitate to call me on my cell at 808-479-1797.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dean I. Okimoto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dean I. Okimoto
President, Nalo Farms, Inc.