



Testimony SB 564

Establish a Farm to School Program and Task Force

Hearing: February 6, 2013

Nancy Redfeather

Dear Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committees,

I am the Director of The Kohala Center's Hawai'i Island School Garden Network, working with 65 schools and school garden programs on Hawai'i Island public/private/charter K-12, a member of the Hawai'i Farm to School and School Garden Hui, a statewide coalition of School Garden Networks and supporting government, institution, and organizations, and a member of the Policy and Advocacy Working Group of the DOH School Garden Task Force.

According to our new DOE Statewide Survey of School Gardens in 2012, there is a growing movement across the state to create school gardens and integrate the nutritional and educational potential of place-based experiential education into the core curriculum of our schools. There are now 168 (43%) school gardens in Hawai'i.

A statewide agricultural strategic plan for Farm to School/School Gardens will promote expansion of farming opportunities (markets and production), create new incentives for farmers, infrastructure support, and facilitate agricultural sustainability, food safety and security. Farm-To-School Programs have been shown to result in increased market opportunities for local farmers and food processors and support economic development.

Farm-To-School and School Garden Programs K-12 improve children's knowledge about agriculture, food, nutrition, and environmental stewardship. Today in Hawai'i, one in 3 children entering school is overweight or obese and are suffering from related illnesses never before seen in children. A nutritionally healthy keiki is ready to learn.

Hawai'i does not have a viable farming workforce for future expansion and development of agricultural lands. Promotion of Farm-To-School and School Gardens K-12 can serve as a foundation for future opportunities in an agriculture related career path.

The USDA recognizes in its new Farm to School and School Garden Grants Program that these 2 programs are inseparable and complement each other. They weave together a fabric of increased prosperity and health for our youth, our communities, and our farmers.

Creating an official Farm to School Program in the state of Hawai'i and a Strategic Plan for that program are important first steps to embedding the commitment into the future of the our State Agencies.

Glenna Owens, Director of the School Food Authority is a leader in this area and I defer to her comments on the subject as well as comments by the Department of Health's Healthy Hawai'i Initiative.



Sincerely,
Nancy Redfeather
The Kohala Center – Hawai'i Island School Garden Network
Hawai'i Farm to School and School Garden Hui
Hawai'i School Garden Task Force