



LATE

February 20, 2013
9:45 a.m.
Conference Room 211

TESTIMONY TO
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

RE: SB 564 SD 1– Relating to Hawaii-Grown Produce

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani and the members of the committee,

My name is Robert Witt and I am executive director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS), which represents 99 private and independent schools in Hawaii and educates over 33,000 students statewide.

HAIS supports SB 564 SD 1 which establishes a working group within the department of agriculture to, among other things, develop the parameters of and implement a demonstration model in which a state facility utilizes locally-grown produce for consumption and to advise the department of agriculture on the feasibility of implementing the demonstration model at other state facilities. The bill also makes an appropriation to the department of agriculture.

In 2010, at the request of the Department of Agriculture (DOA), HAIS launched GROW HAWAII, a three-year effort to build capacity for the use of Hawaii-grown agricultural products in schools, and cultivate healthy food attitudes and behaviors through school garden programs.

Grow Hawaii works to connect schools with Hawaii growers, and increase the capacity of school food services to use fresh produce. We observe that further work must be done to build upon our efforts and those of our partners in the Department of Education (DOE) Office of Child Nutrition to inform food growers of opportunities and procedures to sell to schools and to encourage the development of the Hawaii agriculture industry to meet the needs of institutional buyers. Furthermore, our experience corroborates the well-established notion that in order to increase student interest in healthy, local, food, we must encourage students' personal connection to the sources of their sustenance, as through garden-based education.

HAIS values the efforts on the parts of the Department of Health to convene the School Garden Task Force, and wishes to see these efforts continue with collaboration from the DOE, the DOA, and community stakeholders to plan, implement, and evaluate a lasting farm to school program. HAIS looks forward to assisting this effort however we can.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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February 20, 2013

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TESTIMONY ON SB 564, SD1
RELATING TO HAWAIIAN-GROWN PRODUCE

Room 211
9:45 AM

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committees:

I am Dean Okimoto, President of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation (HFBF). Organized since 1948, the HFBF is comprised of 1,950 farm family members statewide, and serves as Hawaii's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic and educational interest of our diverse agricultural community.

HFBF supports SB 564, SD1 which establishes a Hawaii-grown produce working group to develop a demonstration model to increase procurement of locally grown fruits and vegetables in state facilities.

HFBF strongly supports increased use of locally grown agricultural products, fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy and poultry products in our schools and other public institutions. This will truly be a significant step towards increasing our levels of self- sufficiency.

Many formal and informal studies have been done addressing farm to school programs and we understand the Department of Agriculture has also done some work in this area within the past year. Our farmers and ranchers have tried to work with the procurement system and can speak to the difficulties with the system. For example, supplying to a school or schools within a geographic area will be feasible while providing to the entire school system is unreasonable. Focus should now be on working with the procurement system to make it a reasonable process to the size of farmers and ranchers we have in Hawaii. Assistance to farmers on how to travel through the system should be a priority.

Thank you for this opportunity to address this important issue.