



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 20, 2012**  
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### **Farm to School Program Introduced by Rep. Cynthia Thielen**

*Honolulu* – A bill establishing a Farm to School Program within the Department of Agriculture was introduced today by Hawai'i State Representative Cynthia Thielen (R, 50<sup>th</sup> District: Kailua, Kaneohe Bay). This program would require public schools to purchase Hawai'i -grown produce when available at approximate the same cost as foods imported from out of state.

"Not only does this program support our farming industry, but it offers healthy food choices to our young people. The Farm to School Program is a win-win situation for us all," said Representative Thielen, adding, that the partnership between Hawaii food growers and schools offers numerous nutritional, environmental and economic benefits to our state.

HB1718 (The Farm to School Bill) describes Hawai'i-grown produce as "fruits and vegetables grown in the state which are unprocessed, minimally processed, flash frozen, or otherwise prepared and handled to maintain their freshness while providing convenience to the user".

"Our school budgets are tight, and it is important to point out that this bill stipulates that the foods purchased locally must not cost more than 3 percent of comparable produce. Additionally, local produce must meet US Department of Agriculture requirements," explained Representative Thielen.

In addition to using Hawaii-grown produce in their menu selections, Hawaii schools would also be encouraged to have farmers markets on school grounds, plant school gardens and educate students on the nutritional, environmental, and economic benefits of preparing and consuming Hawaii-grown produce.

"Educating our younger generation on the benefits of eating fresh fruits and vegetables is important if we want to promote wellness and health that will last a lifetime," said Rep. Thielen.

For more information regarding HB1718, contact the office of Representative Cynthia Thielen, (808) 586-6480.

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