



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 04/01/2025

**Time:** 02:00 PM

**Location:** 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** House Finance

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Bill Title:** SB 0894, SD3, HD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for regional kitchen expansion to fulfill the local farm-to-school meal goal requiring thirty per cent of the food served in public schools to consist of locally sourced products. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 894, SD 3, HD 1.

This bill proposes to appropriate funds to the Department to fulfill the local farm-to-school meal goal requiring thirty percent of the food served in public schools to consist of locally sourced products.

The Department is tasked by Act 175, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021, to meet the goal of having 30 percent of food served in public schools to be from locally sourced products by 2030. We believe that the appropriations that could be provided in SB 894 SD 3, HD 1 could help us to move in that direction as it is incorporated as part of our larger regional kitchen endeavor.

Facilities at Bethal (Tacoma), Seattle, and Sacramento Unified School districts are examples of regional and central kitchen concepts on the mainland that we were able to visit, collaborate, and learn from their successes and adaptations in developing our model.

The regional kitchen model is a scalable solution based on high volume regional kitchens that prepare meals and ingredients for distribution to satellite kitchens that store, heat, and serve meals to customers. The benefits of a regional kitchen include: fresh and healthy school meals; high-quality meals with local products; increased procurement of locally grown agricultural products; lowered risk of service disruption, reduction in food waste and reduction in future demand for replacement of

current food service equipment at end of service life.

Transitioning to a regional model will require conducting site feasibility studies looking at space availability, zoning and land entitlements, vehicular access, and utility capacity amongst other factors. Costs in moving to this model are not just in building a regional kitchen but also in converting existing school kitchens into satellite kitchens that are able to receive the meals or ingredients from the regional kitchen. Kitchen equipment for reheating and finishing meals has already been identified by the Department's School Food Services Branch.

Regional kitchens are a new market opportunity for local farmers. Approximately 90 percent of Hawaii's food is grown, processed, imported from the mainland, and delivered to school kitchens to serve over 150,000 students a day in this school year. Our efforts are the key beginnings to ensure healthy, locally sourced meals for students are implemented in order to improve student nutrition. These beginnings will aid in the vision to achieve a sustainable farm-to-state system that will not only feed our keiki but strengthen the local agricultural industry and can only be achieved as we work collaboratively with the University of Hawaii, Hawaii State Legislature, Department of Agriculture, Department of Business and Economic Development, Agribusiness Development Corporation, and other agencies and organizations.

We would respectfully request that the appropriations in the sum of \$55,650,000 or so be necessary for fiscal year 2026 as amended from our previous testimony and \$16,500,000 or thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2027, as also amended from our previous testimony as follows:

For fiscal year 2026:

- \$55,000,000 for additional design and construction funds to service central, leeward and windward district complex areas in the city and county of Honolulu through the expansion of the current Phase 1 Whitmore regional kitchen. This expands the facility to 45,000 square feet on approximately 4 acres to produce 60,000 meals a day at the Whitmore site;
- \$100,000 for a feasibility analysis for a second Oahu site to service Honolulu district complexes in the City and County of Honolulu to produce a minimum of 40,000 meals a day;
- \$250,000 for a feasibility analysis for two (2) sites to service the Hawaii district complex areas in the County of Hawaii; one on the east side to produce a minimum of 12,000 meals a day and one on the west side of the island to produce a minimum of 15,000 meals a day;
- \$150,000 for a feasibility analysis for one site to service the island of Maui district complex areas in the County of Maui to produce a minimum of 18,000 meals a day (not including Hana, Lanai and Molokai); and
- \$150,000 for a feasibility analysis for one site to service the Kauai district complex areas to produce a minimum of 12,000 meals a day in the County of Kauai.

For fiscal year 2027:

- \$4,500,000 for further due diligence, planning, design and land acquisition for the additional site and assessment of the receiving school kitchens in the city and county of Honolulu. There are 172 kitchens on Oahu (67 percent of the statewide total) which will need to be converted to satellite kitchens, and therefore more sites to assess and plan for than on neighbor islands;

- \$6,000,000 for further due diligence, design and land acquisition for two sites and assessment of the receiving school kitchens to service the Hawaii district complex areas in the County of Hawaii; one on the east side and one on the west side of the island;
- \$3,000,000 for further planning, design and land acquisition for one site and assessment of the receiving school kitchens to service the Maui district complex areas in the County of Maui. This does include the feasibility assessment and analysis of stand-alone equipment for Hana, Lanai, and Molokai to ensure continuity of existing operations; and
- \$3,000,000 for further planning, design and land acquisition for one site and assessment of the receiving school kitchens to service the Kauai district complex areas in the County of Kauai.

The Department wishes to note that these appropriation amounts are just an initial estimate and additional funding will likely be needed, particularly in the districts of Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai, as further scoping and planning is completed following the longer-term vision of regional kitchens across the state.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
**AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
HUI HO'OULU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCE

April 1, 2025  
2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 894, SD3, HD1  
RELATING TO EDUCATION

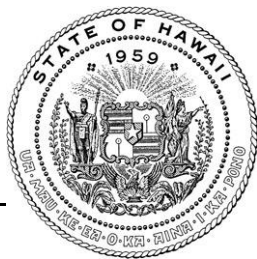
Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** of Senate Bill No. 894, SD3, HD1, that appropriates funds to the Department of Education (DOE) to fulfill the local farm-to-school meal goal requiring 30% of the food served in public schools to consist of locally sourced products.

Act 175, SLH 2021 had set a goal of sourcing at least 30% of school meals from local producers by 2030. The appropriations considered in this bill would allow DOE to better achieve this goal by upgrading the critical infrastructure, equipment, and facilities needed to provide our keiki with food made from locally sourced produce.

We defer to DOE regarding specific appropriation amounts for the several district complex areas considered in the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**  
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI  
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
DIRECTOR

**DANE K. WICKER**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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Statement of  
**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
Director

Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

Tuesday, April 1, 2025  
2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of  
**SB 894, SD3, HD1**  
**RELATING TO EDUCATION.**

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee:

I am submitting testimony in strong support of SB 894 SD3 HD1, which appropriates funds to the Department of Education (DOE) to support the statutory mandate requiring at least thirty percent of school meals to consist of locally sourced products by 2030, as established under Act 175 (2021).

Hawai'i's economy must be diversified to ensure long-term sustainability, and a crucial component of that diversification is strengthening our local agricultural and food production industries. To achieve this, it is imperative that we invest in the necessary infrastructure and facilities that provide certainty to local producers while simultaneously reducing risk and financial burden. Regional kitchens play a pivotal role in anchoring Hawai'i's small farmers by providing them with a consistent and reliable market for their produce, ensuring that more locally grown food is utilized rather than wasted.

Moreover, regional kitchens serve as a critical component of the State's food security and resiliency efforts, particularly in times of natural disasters. In times of crisis, these facilities can be leveraged to prepare meals for communities in need, ensuring that emergency food assistance is readily available. By building and supporting these

centralized food preparation hubs, we not only enhance the nutritional quality of school meals but also create an essential safety net for Hawai'i's most vulnerable populations.

Additionally, the investment in regional kitchens directly supports the goals of Act 176 (2021), which requires state agencies to increase procurement of locally grown and value-added agricultural products in progressive benchmarks through 2050. By providing DOE with regionalized food preparation facilities, the State will be better positioned to scale up local food purchasing and processing capabilities. This will reduce dependency on imported food products and create an efficient supply chain where locally grown and processed ingredients can be integrated into school meal programs in compliance with Act 176's procurement targets.

The challenges outlined in the 2024 annual report on farm-to-school meals—including invasive species, agricultural theft, labor shortages, inadequate capital, and climate change—demonstrate the urgency of this investment. By allocating funds to regional kitchens and food infrastructure, we empower local farmers, support the DOE in meeting its farm-to-school goals under Act 175, and ensure compliance with the local food procurement mandates outlined in Act 176.

I respectfully urge the Legislature to pass SB894 SD3 HD1 to ensure the necessary investments are made in food infrastructure that will benefit Hawai'i's students, farmers, and communities for generations to come.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.



**UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM**

**‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII**

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the

House Committee on Finance

April 1, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience

And

Michael Bruno, Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 894 SD3 HD1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 894 SD3 HD1 which appropriates funds to the Department of Education for regional kitchen expansion to fulfill the local farm-to-school meal goal requiring thirty per cent of the food served in public schools to consist of locally sourced products.

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) supports the efforts of the Department of Education (HiDOE) to fulfill the local farm-to-school meal goal mandated in Act 175, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2021. The regional kitchens project has the potential to build a strong local food and agricultural ecosystem, increase Hawai'i's food self-sufficiency, and improve the nutritional health of our keiki. CTAHR has developed a new vision and an entrepreneurial and community-engaged operational model to build CTAHR's Agricultural research and Extension Stations (CARES) centers as hubs of collaborative innovation and community prosperity and help farmers increase local food production and capture the regional kitchens markets on each island. CTAHR has developed distinct initiatives such as a Controlled Environment Agriculture Innovation Farm which will directly support the regional kitchens project to produce essential food commodities especially leafy greens throughout the year for local farm-to-school meals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



## **TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB894 RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS**

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i State Youth Commission submits testimony in strong support of SB894. This bill addresses an urgent issue that is impacting the lifestyles of youth across the State of Hawai'i. According to a recent study sponsored by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "Twenty-eight percent of youth who were hospitalized and 12% with an Emergency Department (ED) visit had at least 1 chronic condition...Patients with a chronic condition were disproportionately Native Hawaiian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander; 32.3% of those with an inpatient chronic condition and 34.9% of those with an ED chronic condition were Native Hawaiian." These chronic conditions include diabetes, hypertension, and kidney disease, many of which are heavily influenced by diet and lifestyle choices. Furthermore, it is crucial that resources are provided in public schools to mitigate these effects and offer pathways to more sustainable lifestyle habits. While it is not realistic to monitor all lifestyle choices that youth can possibly make, diet and food options are one of the most important and manageable. Through SB894, schools will have the necessary resources to provide balanced and locally sourced meals, providing benefits to both the local economy, job market, as well as students.

As representatives of Hawai'i's youth who have been through the public school system, we have been at the receiving end of current meal plans, much of which are frozen foods or juice



and fruits imported from the continent. Much of this food is also leftover after lunch, filling up entire trash bins. If school meals were to use 30% locally sourced products, healthier eating habits would be encouraged and although not guaranteed, there could be a significant reduction in food waste as well. With the passing of SB894, not only will youth have opportunities for healthier eating choices, but the local community will have an increase in jobs and decrease in reliance on imported goods.

As stated in SB894, “The legislature notes that in order to efficiently and effectively create regional kitchens across the State, the department of education must identify and assess the appropriate sites on each island. Site selection, assessment, planning, and design must be conducted to best meet the needs of our students and ensure accessibility for farmers and agricultural producers.” On top of ensuring the needs of students and agricultural producers, it is of utmost importance that environmental and cultural practitioners are included within this process, allowing for a production cycle that does not hinder or exploit the land and Hawaiian culture.

Once again, the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission urges the committee to vote in support of SB894 to better our school cafeterias and agricultural industries.

Mahalo,

Hawai‘i State Youth Commission



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759  
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921  
e-mail [info@hfbf.org](mailto:info@hfbf.org); [www.hfbf.org](http://www.hfbf.org)

April 1, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**TESTIMONY ON SB 894, SD3, HD1**  
**RELATING TO EDUCATION**

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference  
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

**The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports SB 894, SD3, HD1**, which provides funding to upgrade school facilities to better support the preparation and service of locally grown food in school meals. Strengthening the infrastructure of Hawai'i's school kitchens and cafeterias is essential for expanding the Farm to School program, increasing local food procurement, and ensuring students have access to fresh, nutritious meals.

Hawai'i has set a goal of sourcing at least 30 percent of school meals from local producers by 2030 under Act 175, SLH 2021. However, one of the significant challenges in meeting this goal is that many schools lack the necessary kitchen facilities to store, prepare, and serve fresh, locally sourced food. Many school kitchens were designed to accommodate pre-packaged, processed meals rather than whole, raw agricultural products. Upgrading these facilities will enable schools to handle fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, and other local products, making it easier for food service staff to integrate locally grown ingredients into student meals.

Investing in school kitchen infrastructure also supports Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers by increasing demand for local food. The cost of local agricultural production remains higher than imported alternatives due to high land prices, expensive inputs, labor costs, and regulatory challenges. Expanding Farm to School efforts by improving school kitchens will create a more stable and consistent market for Hawai'i farmers, helping them compete with imported food and supporting long-term agricultural viability.

This bill also aligns with the broader goal of import replacement, where local agricultural products substitute for imported equivalents, reducing Hawai'i's dependence on food from outside the state. Strengthening the capacity of schools to prepare and serve fresh,

locally sourced meals will ensure that more food dollars remain within Hawai'i, supporting local agriculture and boosting the economy.

We urge the committee to pass SB 894, SD3, HD1, to invest in the necessary infrastructure improvements that will expand the Farm to School program, increase local food procurement, and provide students with fresh, healthy meals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.**

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

**HB110 HD1**  
**RELATING TO LOCAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS**

Tuesday, April 1, 2025, 2:00PM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports SB984 SD3 HD1** which appropriates funds to the Department of Education for regional kitchen expansion to fulfill the local farm-to-school meal goal requiring thirty per cent of the food served in public schools to consist of locally sourced products.

Expanded infrastructure for school cafeterias is necessary for successful increase in local food purchasing for the farm-to-school program. Purchasing local produce and proteins requires specific storage, preparation, and cooking. For example, currently the schools can only accommodate pre-cooked hamburger patties. Because this is not available in Hawaii, any hamburger patties are sourced from the continent where they have the machinery to pre-cook and freeze the patties. Supporting the regional kitchen expansion will allow us to address issues like these so that we can move towards purchasing more local proteins for our students.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Our member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of over 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase  
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council  
Managing Director





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Negus Manna  
Lāna'i

India Clark  
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman  
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich  
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura  
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska  
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Finance Committee,

The Hawai'i Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFU supports SB894.**

SB894 appropriates funds to the Department of Education for planning, designing, and constructing regional kitchens statewide. These kitchens are essential to achieving the state's farm-to-school goal of sourcing 30% of school meal ingredients locally by 2030, as mandated by Act 175 (SLH 2021).

As an organization representing family farmers across the state, HFUU sees this bill as a key step toward building a resilient local food system. Regional kitchens will create consistent institutional demand, helping local farmers scale production, reduce food miles, and supply fresher, healthier meals to Hawai'i's students. To strengthen the bill's impact and ensure that local producers are included in the process, **we respectfully recommend the following amendment to Prioritize Food Hub & Family Farmer Engagement** as a new paragraph after line 18, page 2, within Section 2:

The department of education shall prioritize engagement with local food hubs, agricultural cooperatives, and family farmers in each county in the planning and implementation of regional kitchen operations, including the sourcing and aggregation of locally produced food items.

This amendment ensures that regional kitchens will support and work in collaboration with Hawai'i's existing local food infrastructure. Food hubs play a critical role in aggregating and distributing products from small and mid-sized farms and are vital to meeting volume, safety, and consistency requirements for institutional buyers like DOE.

SB894 HD1 is a timely and strategic investment in Hawai'i's agricultural future. With the proposed amendment, this bill will more effectively support family farmers, strengthen local procurement pathways, and help fulfill the state's food security and sustainability goals. HFUU urges the Committee to pass this measure with the recommended amendment.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union



April 1, 2025

Subject: Hawai'i Foodbank in Support of SB 894, SD3, HD1 Relating to Education

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, I express our support for SB 894, SD3, HD1 Relating to Education. This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Education for regional kitchen expansion to fulfill the local farm-to-school meal goal requiring thirty per cent of the food served in public schools to consist of locally sourced products.

Food insecurity is a growing crisis in Hawai'i. The State of Food Insecurity in Hawai'i report, released by Hawai'i Foodbank in May 2024, found that in 2023, 29% of households with children had one or multiple children facing food insecurity. Among these households with children, 9% had children skipping meals because there was not enough food. At the most extreme, 6% of these households had a child or children go a whole day without food because of a lack of money.

As the state's largest hunger-relief organization, Hawai'i Foodbank has been committed to ensuring no one in Hawai'i goes hungry since 1983. We work with over 250 hunger relief partners on O'ahu and Kaua'i to distribute food, and programs like Food 4 Keiki and 'Ohana Produce Plus provide nutritious meals to children and families.

There are well-documented links between food insecurity and poor child health and behavioral outcomes, including physical, developmental, and cognitive impairments. Strengthening the infrastructure of Hawai'i's school kitchens and cafeterias will help expand the Farm to School program, increase investments in local agriculture, and help ensure students have access to the fresh, nutritious meals they need to thrive. We urge you to consider this important measure.

With aloha,

Amy Miller  
President and CEO, Hawai'i Foodbank

**SB-894-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 7:14:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/1/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laura Pokipala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Starting the program that provides local farms to supply meals to our public schools was a great start. Continued appropriation of funds to keep this program growing is a perfect way to support our local farms, while providing healthy food to the children who attend our public school.

Improving our food system by investing in our local farmers and ranchers will help build food sustainability, and it could supply much needed food if bill SB 1300 passes and provides Universal School Meals to all our public schools. If we continue to support local farmers and ranchers maybe we will actually begin exporting our goods one day and bring money into Hawai'i's economy.

**SB-894-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 6:15:48 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/1/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT to help local farmers, food security and sustainability. Mahalo!



**SB-894-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 7:45:03 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/1/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelcy Durbin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 894, which aims to address the discrepancies in the implementation of Act 175, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021. Act 175 mandates that the Department of Education serve school meals using thirty per cent locally sourced products by 2030.

Including locally sourced products in school meals has numerous benefits. It ensures that students consume fresh and nutritious food, supports local farmers and economies, and reduces the carbon footprint associated with transporting food long distances. Moreover, it educates students about the importance of sustainable agriculture and fosters a connection to the land and community.

Locally sourced products are typically fresher and more nutrient-dense than those that have traveled long distances. This freshness translates to better taste and higher nutritional value, which is crucial for the health and development of our students. By increasing the proportion of local products in school meals, we can ensure that students receive the best possible nutrition.

Supporting local agriculture through school meal programs stimulates the state's economy. When schools purchase from local farmers, these funds stay within the community, generating economic growth and supporting local jobs. This cycle of support strengthens Hawaii's agricultural sector and contributes to the overall economic resilience of the state.

One of the primary obstacles is the complexity of local supply chains. Many local farmers may not have the capacity or infrastructure to meet the large volume demands of school districts. Additionally, logistical challenges such as distribution and storage can hinder the efficient delivery of local products to schools.

Adequate funding and resources are essential for supporting local farmers and facilitating the transition to sourcing more local products. Investment in infrastructure, such as cold storage facilities and transportation, is crucial. Additionally, financial incentives and grants can encourage farmers to participate in the farm-to-school program.

In conclusion, the testimony in support of SB 894 emphasizes the critical importance of achieving the goals of Act 175 by increasing the percentage of locally sourced products in school meals. The benefits of this initiative are immense, spanning nutrition, economic growth, environmental sustainability, and education. By addressing the current challenges and

implementing strategic actions, we can make significant progress toward a healthier, more sustainable, and connected community. I urge the committee to support SB 894 and take the necessary steps to fulfill the vision of Act 175 for the benefit of our students, farmers, and the state of Hawaii.

Sincerely,

Kelcy Durbin

**SB-894-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 8:01:33 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/1/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sebastian Penate	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**3/31/2025**

**To: Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and the State of Hawaii house committee on Finance**

**Subject: SB894 SD3 HD1- Relating to Education**

**I am writing in strong support of SB894 SD3 HD1 which allocates appropriate funds for the adoption of a 30% locally sourced diet in schools, via development of regional kitchens. This bill is a holistic approach that wisely enough tends first to the needs of our students. Right now school meals deflate students' motivation with food that doesn't nurture their bodies or their spirits. Promise's continue to be made claiming school meals will source 30% of their food locally by 2030, yet goal posts along the way have been pushed consistently. Supporting SB894 is cementing your dedication to the success of Hawaii's students and reassuring Hawaiian families can depend on your work.**

**Money budgeted towards non-local foods totaled \$77.6 million, compared to local foods which only amounted to \$4.5 million for the 2023-2024 school year. By establishing regional kitchens we can begin investing into our own island's local food production. Regional kitchens are flexible institutions that aim to prepare both meals and ingredients for school meals. This standardized approach to school meals will reinforce agricultural economics as they provide contracts to local farmers. Regional kitchens are a sustainable framework that effectively streamline food distribution and quality control. Schools are some of the biggest institutional food consumers in Hawaii, implementing regional kitchens would close substantial gaps towards a more sustainable Hawaii. The method provides jobs for Hawaiians, nourishes students with culturally significant produce, and most importantly internalizes our food supply chain.**

**I am testifying in support of SB894 S1, as it delivers schools the resources necessary to provide healthy locally sourced meals to our students now and for years to come. Regional kitchens shift Hawaii's import dependent economy towards a better, more centralized and dependable one. Food accessibility is one of the greatest issues faced by Hawaii's residents. Starting at school meals and regional kitchens creates the potential for a more productive Hawaii. We urge the committee to acknowledge that an investment in our students is an investment in our futures.**

**Mahalo,**

**Sebastian Penate**

**(they/them)**