



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**  
H.B. NO. 328, RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS.

**BEFORE THE:**  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**DATE:** Tuesday, January 28, 2025      **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 309 and Videoconference

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Anne T. Horiuchi or Randall M. Wat, Deputy Attorneys General

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Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) provides the following comments.

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal of thirty percent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030. The bill also allows the DOE to establish a plant-based meal program no later than the 2026-2027 school year.

Section 302A-405.6, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), applies to "public schools," which, as defined by section 302A-101, HRS, include charter schools in addition to department schools. To make the wording of the new section added to chapter 302A, HRS, by section 2 of this bill consistent with section 302A-405.6, HRS, we suggest the following revisions to the bill:

- Page 3, line 9: replace "department" with "public".
- Page 3, line 11: replace "school" with "department".
- Page 3, line 13: replace "school" with "public schools".
- Page 3, line 16: replace "department" with "public".
- Page 3, line 17: replace "each school" with "the department".

- Page 4, line 2: replace "department" with "public" and replace "their" with "its".
- Page 4, lines 3 through 4: replace "on meeting" with "for the department to meet".

The new section also authorizes the DOE to accept donations or grants from individuals and other agencies, public and private, for the purposes of supporting the farm to school meal programs. Page 3, lines 19-21. To avoid the commingling of public and private funds, we suggest including wording to create a fund into which private donations or grants would be deposited.

Additionally, it is unclear how the proposed partnerships with nonprofit organizations or private entities will work, and how they will assist the complex areas or individual schools to form their own farm to school meal programs. If the partnerships result in the nonprofit organizations or private entities receiving grants of public funds, then, authority to make administrative grants and standards would be required to comply with section 4 of article VII of the State Constitution ("No . . . appropriation of public money or property made, nor shall the public credit be used, directly or indirectly, except for a public purpose. . . . No grant of public money or property shall be made except pursuant to standards provided by law."). The Department suggests that clarity regarding the proposed partnerships be provided, so that it can be determined whether standards should be provided in the bill.

We are happy to work with this Committee on achieving its legislative intent. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.



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

**Date:** 01/28/2025

**Time:** 02:00 PM

**Location:** 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** House Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Bill Title:** HB 0328 RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030. Allows the Department of Education to establish a plant-based meal program no later than the 2026-2027 school year.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) respectfully provides comments on HB 328.

The Department remains committed to increasing locally sourced products for the school meal program in alignment with Act 175, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021 (Act 175). The School Food Services Branch continues to expand its reach to food vendors across the state, to increase the procurement of locally grown and locally raised products, and to assist with incorporating culturally appropriate meals into school menus. It also continues to support and include students in the recipe development and menu planning process.

The Department is concerned that the decentralization of the farm-to-school program to complex areas will place an inordinate burden on Complex Area Superintendents to manage. School complexes do not have the ability to plan menus that are in federal compliance with the United States Department of Agriculture's National School Lunch Program, nor to procure food through competitive and fair bids that abide by state and federal laws.

For plant-based meals, for the Department to meet federal meal credit compliance statewide and maintain federal financial support, the Department must be able to procure plant-based meat/meat alternates or entrees that meet the definition of a locally sourced product to be able to serve a

plant-based meal option.

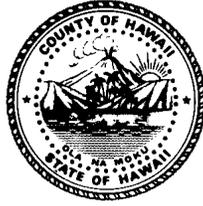
The Department's School Food Services Branch (SFSB) is currently able to offer local plant-based meal items such as salads and sides, but for plant-based proteins, the SFSB finds that Hawaii farms and vendors are not prepared to provide local plant-based meats/meat alternatives sufficient for meals at 257 schools statewide at this time. The SFSB's assessment of the capacity of local vendors, through its 2023 Request for Information campaign, found that Hawaii's agriculture and food manufacturing industry does not yet have large-scale vendors producing sufficient plant-based proteins made from local ingredients. To meet the demands of this bill by the school year 2026-2027, the unintended consequence of this measure may compel the Department to purchase plant-based manufactured products from the mainland to meet this bill's mandate and, therefore, reduce the demand for locally raised animal proteins that we currently purchase to pursue the thirty percent by 2030 local food purchases goal.

Finally, the Department already provides two plant-based meal options that are incorporated regularly in the meal rotation at schools. However, due to the lack of available local plant-based protein suppliers, this is currently procured from mainland vendors.

The Department has and will continue to work towards increasing plant-based meal options within the federal guidelines while prioritizing local food purchases in support of Act 175, sensitive to the environmental impact it may have.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**Jennifer Kagiwada**  
Council Member District 2 South Hilo



Office: (808) 961-8272  
jennifer.kagiwada@hawaiicounty.gov

## HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

DATE: January 28, 2025  
TO: House Committee of Education  
FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member,  
Council District 2  
SUBJECT: HB 328

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Committee Members,

I am testifying in support of HB 328 to require the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate schools to form their own farm-to-school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm-to-school meal goal of 30% locally sourced products by 2030.

Progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals has fallen behind. Action is needed to ensure this very important goal is met. Moreover, offering fresh local food options is found to enhance student health outcomes and provides an opportunity to support local agriculture, while also supporting a healthy climate by eliminating greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from importing food. Providing plant-based meal options provides healthy, tasty, environmentally friendly options our keiki can enjoy.

--HB328 is both a wonderful and common-sense idea that supports our farmers and at the same time helps our keiki by providing local, fresh, healthy options. We know that by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and providing access to meals that contain less processed food, and more fruits and vegetables, we can help keiki reduce their risk for developing chronic diseases and improve their overall health.

--Efforts to support our farmers to build our resilience and avoids the greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from shipping food in for meals offered at public schools. In addition, it stimulates our economy by creating local jobs and supporting the growth of local agriculture. These efforts and more are the type of actions needed to move Hawai'i to a decarbonized economy.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Mahalo,

Jenn Kagiwada

**RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.**  
Mayor

**JOSIAH K. NISHITA**  
Managing Director



**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET  
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793  
[www.mauicounty.gov](http://www.mauicounty.gov)



**LATE**

TO: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Committee on Education

Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair  
Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair  
Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
Committee on Finance

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor  
Rogerene Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: January 27, 2025

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF HB328, RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this measure. The Act requires the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030. Allows the Department of Education to establish a plant-based meal program no later than the 2026-2027 school year.

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. We believe that empowering our complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs creates an overall better situation for collaboration and economic opportunities for farmers and producers within their respective regions.
2. As a collective we have not made significant progress to meeting the farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030. This has negative impacts on our local agricultural economy and our keiki who are subject to eating unhealthy, highly processed foods. These non-locally sourced foods may meet our keiki caloric needs, but not their nutritional needs, which this farm to school system would address.

3. Our DOE institution is the largest market for our farmers to offer their produce too. Creating regional opportunities for farmers to sell their produce to positive impacts economic viability because it will bring down the cost of transportation of goods. Furthermore, regional DOE farm to school systems would increase our overall community's sustainability and resilience during blue sky days and emergency situations, by being foundational components of communities and producers food systems.

Mahalo for your consideration.



# Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai‘i

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January 26, 2025

## Testimony in Support of HB328: Relating to School Meals

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Melodie Aduja, and I am testifying on behalf of the Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii in strong support of HB328, which aims to enhance the quality and sustainability of school meals in our state. This bill requires the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm-to-school meal programs through partnerships, with a goal of having 30% of food served in schools consist of locally sourced products by 2030. Additionally, the bill allows the Department of Education to establish a plant-based meal program no later than the 2026-2027 school year.

### Key Points of Support:

1. **Promoting Local Agriculture:** HB328 will support local farmers and the agricultural industry by increasing the demand for locally sourced products. This will not only boost the local economy but also reduce the carbon footprint associated with transporting food from distant locations.
2. **Healthier School Meals:** By incorporating more fresh, locally sourced, and plant-based options into school meals, this bill will contribute to the overall health and well-being of our students. Access to nutritious meals is essential for their physical and cognitive development.
3. **Environmental Sustainability:** The farm-to-school and plant-based meal programs will promote sustainable agricultural practices and reduce the environmental impact of food production. This aligns with our commitment to protecting Hawaii's natural resources and addressing climate change.
4. **Educational Opportunities:** HB328 will provide valuable educational opportunities for students to learn about agriculture, nutrition, and sustainability. By connecting students with the source of their food, we can foster a greater appreciation for the environment and healthy eating habits.

In conclusion, the Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii strongly supports HB328 and urges the committee to pass this important legislation. By enhancing the quality and sustainability of school meals, we can ensure a healthier and more sustainable future for our keiki and our islands.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this critical bill.

Sincerely,

Melodie Aduja

Co-chair, Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii



## House Committee on Education

### Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports: SB328

Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 2:00pm; Conference Room 309

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the committee,

HAPA supports HB 328 which requires the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030. Allows the Department of Education to establish a plant-based meal program no later than the 2026-2027 school year.

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge by decentralizing the procurement process.

Regionalizing procurement will allow schools, such as Miliani HS who have already successfully implemented 'Āina Pono farm to school programs in the past with the option to ramp up their local procurement efforts once again. It is important to note that they reported cost savings while procuring more local food, not increased costs.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawai'i's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes.

Please support HB328. Mahalo for your consideration

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick, Executive Director



## HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS  
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Department of Pediatrics

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Hawai'i Health Partners

Misty Pacheco, DrPH  
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Justin Puckett, CPA, MBA  
Humana

Kathleen Roche, MS, RN, CENP  
Kaiser Permanente

Dina Shek, JD  
Medical-Legal Partnership  
For Children in Hawai'i

Garret Sugai  
HMSA

JoAnn Tsark, MPH  
John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native  
Hawaiian Research Office

## HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a  
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &  
Evaluation

Community Health  
Worker Initiatives

COVID-19 Response

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Network

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &  
Community Living

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: January 26, 2025

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee of Education

RE: Support for HB 328 Relating to School Meals

Hrg: Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 2:00 pm, Conf Rm 309

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Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)<sup>1</sup> supports House Bill 328, which mandates the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to establish farm-to-school programs. This legislation aligns with HIPHI's commitment to promoting sustainable food systems, healthy eating, and active living among Hawai'i's youth. By fostering direct connections between local farmers and schools, farm-to-school programs provide students with fresh, minimally processed foods while offering educational opportunities that build their understanding of agriculture, nutrition, and environmental sustainability.

The primary benefit of farm-to-school programs is their positive impact on student health<sup>2</sup>. Childhood obesity and diet-related illnesses, such as diabetes and heart disease, are significant concerns in Hawai'i, and increasing access to fresh, locally grown food in schools is a critical strategy for improving nutrition among students.<sup>3</sup> When students consume healthier meals made with fresh produce, they are more likely to develop lifelong habits that support their well-being. Studies have shown that farm-to-school programs increase fruit and vegetable consumption among students while reducing their intake of highly processed foods.

In addition to health benefits, farm-to-school programs provide invaluable educational opportunities. Hands-on learning experiences, such as school gardens and farm visits, help students understand where their food comes from and the importance of sustainable agricultural practices. These

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<sup>1</sup> Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

<sup>2</sup> National Farm to School Network. *THE BENEFITS OF FARM TO SCHOOL*. May 2020, [cdn.prod.website-files.com/5c469df2395cd53c3d913b2d/611027419232d281ad2f51ff\\_BenefitsFactSheet.pdf](https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/5c469df2395cd53c3d913b2d/611027419232d281ad2f51ff_BenefitsFactSheet.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Okihiro, May. *Childhood Obesity in Hawai'i: The Role of the Healthcare Provider*. 1 July 2011, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3158457](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3158457).



experiences also promote science, math, and environmental education by allowing students to engage in real-world applications of these subjects. By integrating agriculture into the school curriculum, students gain skills that can lead to future careers in farming, nutrition, and environmental science, which are vital to Hawai'i's economic and food security.

HB 328 also supports local agriculture and strengthens Hawai'i's food systems by ensuring that schools can source food directly from local farmers. Hawai'i imports nearly 90% of its food, making it vulnerable to supply chain disruptions and high food costs.<sup>4</sup> Encouraging local food procurement through farm-to-school programs supports small farmers and agricultural businesses and reduces the state's dependence on imported food. Strengthening Hawai'i's local food economy is crucial to achieving greater food security and resilience, especially with climate change and global supply chain uncertainties.

HIPHI urges the legislature to support HB328, a crucial investment in students' well-being, the strength of the local economy, and the resilience of Hawai'i's food systems. Farm-to-school programs are a proven strategy for improving child nutrition, supporting educational goals, and revitalizing local agriculture, and their expansion will benefit communities across the state.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kawika Kahiapo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Kawika Kahiapo  
Hawaii Farm to School Network Program Coordinator  
Hawaii Public Health Institute

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<sup>4</sup> OFFICE OF PLANNING, et al. "INCREASED FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY." *HAWAII STATE PLAN*, report, U.S. Department of Commerce, 2007, [files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/op/spb/INCREASED\\_FOOD\\_SECURITY\\_AND\\_FOOD\\_SELF\\_SUFFICIENCY\\_STRATEGY.pdf](https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/op/spb/INCREASED_FOOD_SECURITY_AND_FOOD_SELF_SUFFICIENCY_STRATEGY.pdf).

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 7:51:45 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan B Roberts Emery	Green Party of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Memembers of Committee,

I am writing to you today to express the Strong Support of Green Party of Hawai'i for HB328. It is a win win for the schools, local farmers, and the keiki. By offering fresh local food options to enhance student health , parents, teachers and the community benefit. HB328 provides an opportunity to support local agriculture, while also supporting a healthy climate by eliminating the greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from importing food. Providing plant-based meal options provides healthy, tasty, climate-friendly options our keiki can enjoy. Less plastic, more ono !

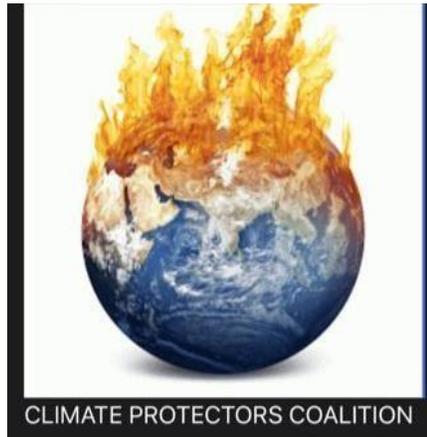
Mahalo nui ,

Green Party of Hawai'i

Susan RobertsEmery

Co chair GPH

Paauilo



To: The Honorable Representative Justin Woodson, Chair, the Honorable Trish LaChica, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Education

From: Climate Protectors Hawai'i (by Ted Bohlen)

Re: Hearing **HB328 RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS**

Hearing: Tuesday January 28, 2025 2:00 p.m.

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee on Education:

The mission of the Climate Protectors Hawai'i is to educate and engage the local community in climate change action, to help Hawai'i show the world the way back to a safe and stable climate. Local produce will cause less greenhouse gas emissions.

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**The Climate Protectors Hawai'i SUPPORTS HB328 and proposes amendments to make the plant-based meal option program more effective in schools that may elect it!**

This bill requires DOE to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual Department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs. **This bill would be good for students, farmers and Hawai'i residents.**

Hawaii's food supply is not secure. We are very vulnerable to food supply interruption because we import over 80 percent of our food.

Locally grown produce enhances food security and can offer students healthier, fresher, better tasting meals. The Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE) should play a key role in educating students about healthy meals by facilitating local food and plant-based food options where individual schools elect them. This will also help DOE move closer to achieving the overall goal of 30% local farm to school food by 2030.

**The bill could be improved, however, by making a similar DOE program requirement apply for a plant-based meal option for school complexes or individual schools that wish to elect that option.**

A diet that consists of fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds, and herbs and spices has been shown to reduce the chance of developing diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and various forms of cancer, among other chronic diseases. Many students, including many Asian-American students, are lactose-intolerant and should have an option to avoid dairy products. **Offering meal options to students that consist of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, herbs and spices, and non-dairy beverages can promote a healthy lifestyle for the State's youth and provide broader choices for students.**

**Climate Protectors Hawai'i proposes three amendments as shown on the attached marked up bill.**

- 1. The first change would be to make the plant-based meal program a requirement for DOE to authorize and facilitate local school complexes or individual schools that elect to provide a plant-based meal as an option under the school meals program.**
- 2. The second change is to remove a disincentive to trying new meal programs where staffing depends on meal counts.**
- 3. The third change is to recognize that there are non-dairy beverages that meet the United States Department of Agriculture's nutrition standards for dairy milk substitutes that should be considered for inclusion in a plant-based meal option.**

Thank you for considering the proposed amendments to this good bill. **Please pass this bill with the requested amendments.**

Mahalo!

Climate Protectors Hawai'i (by Ted Bohlen)

<u>HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</u>	<u>H.B. NO.</u>	<u>328</u>
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<u>THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025</u>		-
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<u>STATE OF HAWAII</u>		-
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A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that setting a target goal of thirty per cent of food served in public schools to consist of locally sourced products, as established pursuant to Act 175, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021, is of great benefit for the health of Hawaii's students.

The legislature further finds that the Aina Pono program has been considered a success, particularly in the Mililani and Kohala school districts, with evidence showing increased student meal participation, reduced food waste, cost savings, and a significant rise in locally sourced food served in school cafeterias. The program is seen as a positive step toward educating students about fresh, local food options while supporting local farmers.

The legislature further finds that diversifying school meal offerings to include more fresh and minimally processed options can enhance student health outcomes and provide an opportunity to support local agriculture.

The legislature additionally finds that a plant-based diet has been shown to reduce the chance of developing diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancers, among other things. Offering a variety of diets, including plant-based meals, can also greatly increase demand for local greens and promote local farming jobs and agriculture. Schools around the United States have increased their offering of plant-based school lunches with New York City offering daily plant-based meal options and California's twenty-five largest school districts providing vegan options on more than half of middle and high school menus. Providing plant-based meals to students can promote not only a healthy lifestyle for the State's youth but encourage students to make environmentally conscious personal decisions.

The purpose of this Act is to:

(1) Require the department of education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030; and

(2) ~~Authorize~~ **Require** the department of education to establish a plant-based meal program **to authorize and facilitate efforts by complex areas or individual department schools that elect** to provide a plant-based meal as an option under the school meals program.

SECTION 2. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to part II, subpart C, to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§302A- Farm to school meals; complex areas; school plans. (a) The department shall authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships with nonprofit organizations or private entities in order for the school to reach the local farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030, pursuant to section 302A-405.6.

(b) The department shall collaborate with the complex areas or individual department schools and the farm to school providers to ensure that each school meets the local farm to school meal goal.

(c) The department may accept donations or grants from individuals and other agencies, public and private, for the purposes of supporting the farm to school meal programs.

(d) The department shall ensure that each individual department school participating in their own farm to school program maintain data and metrics to track their progress on meeting the local farm to school meal goal. **Schools that participate in the school meals option pilot program shall not be subject to the same rules of meals count in the determination of staffing requirements.**

SECTION 3. (a) Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, the department of education ~~may~~ **shall** establish a plant-based meal program **to authorize and facilitate efforts by complex areas or individual department schools that elect** to provide a plant-based meal as an option under the school meals program.

(b) As part of the program, the department of education may establish a day within the school week to provide plant-based options for school meals.

(c) If the department establishes a plant-based meal program pursuant to subsection (a), the department shall:

(1) Submit an interim report on the progress of the plant-based meal program to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2027; and

(2) Submit a final report on the plant-based meal program, including any findings, recommendations, and proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2028.

(d) The plant-based meal program shall cease to exist on June 30, 2028.

(e) For the purposes of this section, "plant-based meal" means a meal consisting of all minimally processed fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, herbs, and spices, **and non-dairy beverages that meet the United States Department of Agriculture's nutrition standards for dairy milk substitutes** and that excludes all animal products, including red meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy products.

SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

INTRODUCED BY:

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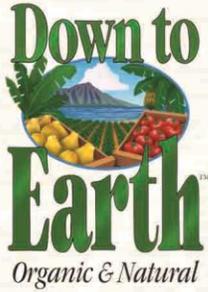
**Report Title:**

Department of Education; Farm to School Meals; Department Schools; School Meals; Plant-based Option; Plant-Based Meal Program

**Description:**

Requires the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030. Requires the Department of Education to establish a plant-based meal program no later than the 2026-2027 school year to authorize and facilitate efforts by complex areas or individual department schools that elect to provide a plant-based meal as an option under the school meals program.

Love Life!



HB328 RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS  
House Committee on Education  
January 28, 2025, 2:00pm State Capitol

Aloha Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair, Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair, and Committee Members.

**Down to Earth Organic and Natural testifies in support of HB328.**

*Down to Earth Organic and Natural has six locations on Oahu and Maui. Since we opened in 1977, we have supported healthy lifestyles and preservation of the environment by selling local, fresh, organic and natural products, and by promoting a healthy, plant-based and vegetarian lifestyle.*

We are strongly in support of HB328 to require the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal and allow the Department of Education to establish a plant-based meal program no later than the 2026-2027 school year.

This program is not only morally imperative but also a strategic economic and health investment. A 2023 study published by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine states that plant-based diets improve mental health by reducing anxiety and depression while fostering greater emotional well-being. Additionally, a 2023 review in *Nutrients* demonstrated that plant-based diets improve insulin resistance, aid in weight management, and reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes—issues that are of particular concern in Hawaii.

With over 11% of Hawaii's population diagnosed with diabetes and an estimated 39,000 more undiagnosed, the disease imposes a significant financial burden on our state, costing approximately \$1.5 billion annually (American Diabetes Association, 2021). Plant-based meals in schools can serve as a proactive measure to reduce the prevalence of these conditions while teaching keiki the value of healthful eating habits early in life.

Allowing keiki to experience plant-based meals, perhaps for the first time, offers a pathway to healthier lifestyles and a greater understanding of sustainability. This program will not only improve our keiki's physical and mental well-being but also foster an appreciation for fresh, locally sourced foods, supporting Hawaii's farmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

Alison Riggs  
Public Policy & Government Relations Manager  
Down to Earth

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To: The House Committee on Education (EDN)  
From: Sherry Pollack, Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org  
Date: Tuesday, January 28, 2025, 2pm

### **In strong support of HB328**

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the EDN Committee,

I am Co-Founder of the Hawaii chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org **strongly supports HB328** that requires the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030.

This measure further allows the Department of Education to establish a plant-based meal program no later than the 2026-2027 school year. Plant-based meals provide a healthy, tasty, climate-friendly option our keiki can enjoy. We strongly urge the Committee to amend this measure and make this a **requirement** to ensure this important option is implemented. It is important to note that testimony provided by students in previous years revealed that some students are going hungry due to the lack of a plant-based meal option.

HB328 supports our farmers and at the same time helps our keiki by providing local, fresh, healthy options. We know that by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and providing access to meals that contain less processed food, and more fruits and vegetables, we can help keiki reduce their risk for developing chronic diseases and improve their overall health.

Efforts to support our farmers also builds our resiliency and avoids the greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from shipping food in for meals offered at public schools. In addition, it stimulates our economy by creating local jobs and supporting the growth of local agriculture. These efforts and more are the type of actions needed to move Hawaii to a decarbonized economy. Truly this is a win:win proposition.

If we are to solve the climate crisis, it will require all of us working together. We all need to be part of the solution. Importantly, HB328 offers an opportunity to empower our keiki by giving them the opportunity to make sustainable food choices that will help mitigate climate breakdown. Bottom line, HB328 will support our local farmers, offer healthy options for our keiki, while also supporting the health of our climate.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support with the requested amendment** to this important legislation.

Sherry Pollack  
Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org



**Officers**

Kaipo Kekona  
State President

Anabella Bruch  
Vice-President

Maureen Datta  
Secretary

Reba Lopez  
Treasurer

Aloha Chair La Chica, Vice Chair Woodson, and Members of the House Education Committee,

**Chapter Presidents**

Clarence Baber  
Kohala, Hawai'i

Tony Vera  
East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Andrea Drayer  
Ka'u, Hawai'i

Maureen Datta  
Kona, Hawai'i

The Hawaii 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. **HFUU supports HB328.**

This initiative strengthens the bond between educational institutions and local farmers, enhancing the resilience and sustainability of our food systems. Local sourcing not only enriches the nutritional quality of school meals but also serves as a pivotal educational tool to teach students about the importance of local agriculture and food security.

Our local farmers are eager to supply schools with high-quality, fresh ingredients and are ready to expand their crop varieties to support this initiative. Through this legislation, we can pave the way for a healthier, more sustainable future for our children and our islands.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF

Fawn Helekahi-Burns  
Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer  
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros  
Mauna Kahālāwai,  
Maui

Kaipo Kekona  
Lahaina, Maui

Kilia Avelino-Purdy  
Moloka'i

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



## Hawaii Legislative Council Members

Joell Edwards  
Wainiha Country Market  
Hanalei

Russell Ruderman  
Island Naturals  
Hilo/Kona

Dr. Andrew Johnson  
Niko Niko  
Family Dentistry  
Honolulu

Robert H. Pahia  
Hawaii Taro Farm  
Wailuku

Maile Meyer  
Na Mea Hawaii  
Honolulu

Tina Wildberger  
Kihei Ice  
Kihei

L. Malu Shizue Miki  
Abundant Life  
Natural Foods  
Hilo

Tanya Aynessazian  
Principal Contractor

Chamber of  
Sustainable Commerce  
P.O. Box 22394  
Honolulu, HI 96823

**Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair**  
**Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair**  
Committee on Education

Tuesday, January 28, 2025  
2:00pM in Room 309

RE: **HB328** Farm to School Meals - **Strong Support**

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Committee,

The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents over 450 small businesses and entrepreneurs across the State of Hawaii that strive for a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity; we know Hawaii can strengthen its economy without hurting workers, consumers, communities or the environment.

This is why we strongly support HB328, which requires the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate schools to form their own farm to school meal programs to meet the local farm to school goal of 30% food served to consist of locally sourced products by 2030.

As residents engaged in commerce in our communities, we urge this committee to vote in favor of HB328, a common sense bill that supports local farmers and provide students with local, fresh and healthy meal options. Healthy lifestyle choices begin when we are keiki. By providing access to meals than contain less processed food that include more fresh fruits and vegetables, we help our future - our keiki - reduce their risk for developing chronic and autoimmune diseases, and improve their overall health.

In addition, HB328 supports local farmers, who build our residency, stimulate our economy by creating local jobs and supporting the circular growth of our state's agriculture industry. These actions help move Hawaii to a more decarbonized economy by avoiding the greenhouse gases that are emitted when we ship in food for meals offered through the public school system.



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Date: January 26, 2025

To: Representative Justin Woodson,  
Chair Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee of Education

From: Hawai'i Youth Food Council

Re: **SUPPORT for HB 328**

Hearing: Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 2:00 pm, Conf Rm 309

Aloha, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Hawai'i Youth Food Council in strong support of Bill #HB328. This bill authorizes the Department of Education to establish a recognition program that incentivizes schools to create and submit plans for reaching the goal of sourcing 30% of the food served in schools from local farms by 2030.

This bill represents a significant opportunity to improve our students' health, well-being, and future while supporting a sustainable local food system. By creating an incentive for schools to commit to this goal, we are not just addressing the immediate needs of students but laying the foundation for long-term positive change within our communities. With this bill, we can drive real, meaningful progress in the Farm to School movement, ensuring that our schools educate students and nourish them with fresh, healthy, locally grown food.

As a student who experiences school lunch every day, I can speak firsthand to the realities of the current food system in our schools. The processed, packaged foods that dominate our cafeterias are a growing concern. The impact on student health is clear, as many of my peers struggle with nutrition-related issues, which are only becoming more prevalent. The situation is becoming dire—our health is deteriorating, and it's not just the students. Family members of students are facing increased health problems as well, limiting their ability to be active participants in their children's lives. This bill offers an essential step forward in reversing these harmful trends.

By setting a goal of 30% locally sourced food by 2030, this bill establishes a realistic yet ambitious target that can make a tangible difference. This goal is well within reach if we prioritize local food systems and strengthen partnerships with local farmers. Currently, less than 30% of the food served in our schools comes from local sources, which should be alarming. The potential for positive change is clear in terms of improving public health and creating sustainable, local

[hiphi.org/HYFC](http://hiphi.org/HYFC) • 707 Richards Street, Suite 300 • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

The Hawai'i Youth Food Council is a Hawai'i Farm to School Network program and Hawai'i Public Health Institute program. It includes students from public, charter, and independent high schools across Hawai'i. The council was established in 2020 to engage and empower youth in rewriting the present narrative of Hawai'i's food system. Members identify and address systemic issues throughout various dimensions of the food chain to promote community participation in forming resilient, equitable local food economies.



economic opportunities that will benefit our farmers, communities, and island economy. Local farms are struggling to access larger markets, and this bill provides a path forward for them to thrive while supporting the broader community.

In conclusion, this bill is an investment in the immediate and future health of our students, local farmers, and the island community. If we are to prioritize the well-being of Hawai'i's future, then we must make this bill a priority. We urge you to support this vital legislation and ensure that our children have access to the nourishment they deserve while fostering economic growth in our local agricultural sector.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We request your support in passing HB328.

Sincerely,

Shania Wilson & co-members of the Hawai'i Youth Food Council

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The **Hawai'i Youth Food Council** is a Hawai'i Farm to School Network program and Hawai'i Public Health Institute program. It includes students from public, charter, and independent high schools across Hawai'i. The council was established in 2020 to engage and empower youth in rewriting the present narrative of Hawai'i's food system. Members identify and address systemic issues throughout various dimensions of the food chain to promote community participation in forming resilient, equitable local food economies.



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

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

**HB328**  
RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS

Tuesday, January 28, 2025, 2:00PM  
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **offers comments on HB328** which requires the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030 and allows the Department of Education to establish a plant-based meal program no later than the 2026-2027 school year.

The Department of Education should focus on its goal to purchase local food for school lunches – a goal that positively contributes to each student's health as well as to Hawaii's agricultural sector and the local economy overall. Claiming that "providing plant-based meals to students can promote not only a healthy lifestyle for the State's youth but encourage students to make environmentally conscious personal decisions" is a stance that local beef, and other local animal products are not environmentally conscious – this is a stance we do not agree with.

**Advancing Food Security**

With cattle consistently in the top 5 agricultural commodities in the state, beef is incredibly important to advancing Hawaii's food security. Hawaii's paniolo have endured generations of challenges, and while the pineapple and sugar industries faltered, the cattle industry continues to steward tracts of land and find innovative ways to stay in business. We encourage the State to look to Hawaii's ranchers as partners in increasing food security, such as continuing to provide beef for the Farm to School program and as a resource for reducing fire fuel loads.

**Nutrition**

The American Heart Association recognizes beef as a heart healthy protein and even provides recipes that include lean beef. Research by Roussell et al (2012) shows eating lean beef as part of a heart-healthy dietary pattern can help maintain normal cholesterol levels. Hawaii's locally grown beef provides 10 essential nutrients in a single 3 oz. serving. This includes high-quality protein, iron, zinc and B vitamins. The iron in beef is heme iron, which is more easily absorbed than nonheme iron, which is the



main form of iron found in plant proteins. Iron is vital as it helps red blood cells carry oxygen to body tissue, but even further, it also plays an important role in cognitive health such as memory, learning, and reasoning.

### Environmental Stewardship

If we encourage individuals not to choose beef, some of our most avid land stewards will suffer. Ranchers are stewards of the land and are key in removing invasive species, reducing fire fuel loads, and increasing carbon sequestration through rotational grazing (Bremer et al., 2021). Beef raised in the US has one of the lowest carbon footprints in the world, and according to the Environmental Protection Agency, cattle are responsible for just 2% of greenhouse gas emissions in the US, with the full lifecycle of raising cattle accounting for 3.7% of greenhouse gas emissions (Rotz et al., 2019). This improvement in production is a result of research in genetics, the quality of cattle feeds, animal welfare and management techniques, and the inclusion of technology.

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

### Sources Cited

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Rotz, C. A., Asem-Hiablue, S., Place, S., & Thoma, G. (2019). Environmental footprints of beef cattle production in the United States. *Agricultural Systems*, 169, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agsy.2018.11.005>

Roussell, M. A., Hill, A. M., Gaugler, T. L., West, S. G., Heuvel, J. P. V., Alaupovic, P., Gillies, P. J., & Kris-Etherton, P. M. (2012). Beef in an Optimal Lean Diet study: Effects on lipids, lipoproteins, and apolipoproteins. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 95(1), 9-16. <https://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.111.016261>

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 1:46:53 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ian Kennedy	Strata Farms LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawai‘i has a unique opportunity to strengthen its local agricultural sector while improving the quality of food served in our schools. By prioritizing locally sourced ingredients in school meals, we can provide students with nutritious, culturally significant foods such as kalo and sweet potatoes, fostering a deeper understanding of and connection to Hawai‘i’s rich agricultural heritage.

Unfortunately, progress toward the state’s goal of sourcing 30% locally grown or produced food for school meals by 2023 has been slow. This bill aims to accelerate efforts by incentivizing schools to take meaningful action toward achieving the Aloha+ Challenge targets.

Public procurement is a powerful tool to expand markets for Hawai‘i’s farmers and producers. By leveraging this approach, we can reduce reliance on imported food, support local producers, and build a more resilient food system.

This initiative also promises long-term benefits for students. Access to healthier, locally sourced meals can improve learning outcomes while ensuring children have culturally appropriate food options that reflect Hawai‘i’s values. I support this bill and hope it has the support needed. - Ian Kennedy



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**LATE**

**Osa Tui, Jr.**  
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**Cheney Kaku**  
Secretary-Treasurer  
**Ann Mahi**  
Executive Director

## TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Item: HB 328 – Relating to School Meals**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing: Tuesday, January 28, 2025, 2:00 pm, Room 309**

**Submitter: Osa Tui, Jr., President - Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) **supports** HB 328, which aims to improve the nutritional quality of school meals in Hawai'i. The bill's focus on increasing locally sourced food and offering plant-based options aligns with our commitment to student health and well-being. We believe that providing nutritious and culturally relevant meals is essential for academic success and overall development.

HB 328's emphasis on farm-to-school programs and plant-based meals is a step in the right direction. Incorporating more fresh produce and whole grains into school menus will not only benefit students' health but also support local farmers and the local economy. Additionally, offering plant-based options caters to diverse dietary needs and preferences while promoting environmental sustainability.

We urge the committee to pass HB 328 and invest in the health and future of Hawai'i's keiki. By prioritizing nutritious and sustainable school meals, we can create a healthier and more vibrant learning environment for all students.

Mahalo.



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**LATE**

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii  
The House of Representatives  
Committee on Education

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association

January 28, 2025

H.B. 328 – RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO wishes to provide comments on H.B. 328 which proposes to require the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal of thirty percent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030.

This effort to decentralize the farm to school meal program may cause unintended inequities. Currently, the Department has an office at the state level of their tri-level system which is responsible for developing and administering statewide program plans, budgets, policies, standards and specifications for food service operations of the entire public school system. Authorizing complex areas or individual department schools to form their own programs may lead to challenges in collecting and interpreting data and inconsistent practices for providing school meals. It will also create an additional administrative burden on the complex area level staff as well as on school administrators, cafeteria managers, and their support staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on H.B. 328.

Respectfully submitted,

Kauanui Sabas  
Legislative Manager

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/24/2025 10:59:49 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Donna Fischer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is important in so many ways to our children's health and our local economy.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 7:17:43 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Barbara Best	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This win-win bill has much to recommend it from helping farmers, the environment, the health of our keiki.

Progress in Hawaii’s goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals has fallen behind. Action is needed to ensure this very important goal is met. Moreover, offering fresh local food options is found to enhance student health outcomes and provides an opportunity to support local agriculture, while also supporting a healthy climate by eliminating the greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from importing food. Providing plant-based meal options provides healthy, tasty, climate-friendly options our keiki can enjoy.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 10:37:55 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michele Nihipali	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB328 is both a wonderful and common-sense idea that supports our farmers and at the same time helps our keiki by providing local, fresh, healthy options. We know that by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and providing access to meals that contain less processed food, and more fruits and vegetables, we can help keiki reduce their risk for developing chronic diseases and improve their overall health.

--Efforts to support our farmers builds our resiliency and avoids the greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from shipping food in for meals offered at public schools. In addition, it stimulates our economy by creating local jobs and supporting the growth of local agriculture. These efforts and more are the type of actions needed to move Hawaii to a decarbonized economy.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Michele Nihipali

54-074 A Kam Hwy.

Hauula, HI 96717

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 12:21:07 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB328. I would amend the bill so that school lunches are free for all students.

Mike Golojuch, Sr

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 12:50:01 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jesse kabat	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Plant-based meals reduce carbon footprints, require fewer resources, and cater to dietary restrictions. Supporting HB328 fosters health, sustainability, and compassionate values for Hawaii's students.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 1:03:56 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support. This bill is truly win-win-win.

1. It supports the keiki who can likely have access to healthier fruits and vegetables. Higher intake of these is scientifically proven to raise happiness levels.
2. It supports farmers who as a group has a higher suicide rate than the general population.
3. It supports the local economy like concentric rings moving outward..

Given these benefits, this bill can possibly lower the cost of health-related support services in coming decades.

Strong support. Thank you.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 1:27:25 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Evelyn Aczon Hao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this bill. It does two major and very important things for all of Hawaii -- its keiki, its economy, its food sustainability.

1. For our keiki: It brings nutritious, fresh food to our children which keeps them healthy and learning. 2. For our economy, it supports our farms/farmers/workers. 3. It helps toward building Hawaii's food sustainability. Today, 90 % of our food need to be brought in from outside.

This one bill can do so much good for all!!

Respectfullu submitted, Evelyn Hao

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 2:47:55 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**HB328 STRONGLY SUPPORT**

Aloha Representatives. I'm writing to ask you to support HB328.

HB328 is both a wonderful and common-sense idea that supports our farmers and at the same time helps our keiki by providing local, fresh, healthy options. We know that by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and providing access to meals that contain less processed food, and more fruits and vegetables, we can help keiki reduce their risk for developing chronic diseases and improve their overall health.

Efforts to support our farmers builds our resiliency and avoids the greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from shipping food in for meals offered at public schools. In addition, it stimulates our economy by creating local jobs and supporting the growth of local agriculture. These efforts and more are the type of actions needed to move Hawaii to a decarbonized economy.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 5:33:52 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Emelia Briscoe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB328.

Mahalo,

Emelia Briscoe, Honolulu

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 5:37:37 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tasman Kekai Mattox	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB328.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 6:04:59 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
MissT	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support. Progress in Hawaii's goal of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals has fallen behind and we must correct that.

Providing plant-based meal options provides healthy, tasty, climate-friendly options our keiki can enjoy.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 9:54:28 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Eliel Starbright	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB328. Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB328.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 10:50:14 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Paul Bernstein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodsen and members of EDN,

I'm testifying in support of HB328. One of the keys to making Hawaii more resilient is increasing the share of food produced locally. Increasing the demand for locally produce food would greatly assist in this goal. HB328 will help with this effort. Please pass this bill out of your committee.

Mahalo,

Paul Bernstein

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 11:54:47 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
JON BRODZIAK	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Woodson and Members of the Education Committee,

HB328 is a straightforward yet impactful proposal that serves two vital purposes: supporting our farmers and ensuring our keiki have access to fresh, local, and healthy meal options. By providing meals rich in fruits and vegetables and less reliant on processed foods, this bill takes meaningful steps toward reducing the risk of chronic diseases and improving the health and well-being of Hawaii's youth. Promoting healthy lifestyles at an early age is not just a benefit to individuals but to the state as a whole.

Moreover, this initiative strengthens Hawaii's resilience by reducing reliance on imported food and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with shipping. Supporting local farmers not only builds a robust agricultural sector but also stimulates our economy by creating jobs and fostering sustainable practices. HB328 represents the kind of forward-thinking legislation needed to guide Hawaii toward a decarbonized economy while nourishing the land and its people.

Thank you for your consideration, and I urge you to support HB328.

Yours sincerely,

Jon Brodziak

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 1:22:39 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Paul Kimo Pestana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our children will have more nutritious foods, such as taro and sweet potatoes while becoming more connected to where their food comes from.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 3:37:13 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dylan Okihiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB328 is the perfect opportunity to enhance our food supply independence and to bring more nutritious, fresh options into the 'ōpū's of our keiki.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 5:00:40 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lela Kalama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB328.

mahalo,

Lela Kalama, Kea'au, HI

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 6:15:33 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB110. Mahalo.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 7:14:46 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Irena Bliss	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai‘i’s goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii’s farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai‘i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes.

Please support HB328.

It is vital to continue to live the values of Aloha ‘Āina, Mālama ‘Āina and make decisions that support the well-being and thriving of all future generations on island.

Mahalo nui for your consideration and support.

Irena Bliss  
Ha‘ikū, Maui 96708

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 7:22:59 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
cheryl hendrickson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB328.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 8:46:33 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tasha Firestone	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB328.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 8:50:11 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tamara Luthy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB328.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 9:23:15 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Debra M Javar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully SUPPORT this hb328.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 9:52:29 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB328.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 10:05:52 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ann Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge you to support HB328, which will incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge. Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes.

Thank you

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 2:30:23 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB328 has the potential to benefit our environment, our food security, and our keiki. Please support HB328.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 3:46:47 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Isis Usborne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai‘i’s goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii’s farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai‘i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB110.

Mahalo,

Isis “Izzy” Usborne (they/them)

Kapahulu Ave resident (96815)

2026 JD Candidate at William S. Richardson School of Law

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# Stephanie Skow, MD

Board Certified Psychiatrist and Plant-Based Physician & Educator

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1/26/25

## Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee on Education:

As a physician, I support bill HB328, with the 30% local food target and the plant-based lunch option for students.

**Meat made from plants!** Now a popular request among school age children. The Impossible meats, for example, have the USDA Child Nutrition Label. Nutrient packed, protein-packed, and great for the environment, a win-win for school lunches! The “protein portion” of the school lunch will support our mainland farming partners. While the fruit and vegetable portion of the school lunches can meet the 30% support local farmers goals.

### And what about the milk mandate?

Soy milk has been officially recognized as having the same protein and calcium content as cow's milk in the latest formulation of the American Dietary Guidelines.

As of today, soy milk needs a written request from a parent to be served at school lunches in lieu of cow's milk. The vast majority (80-90%) of Asian-American, Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black, and Native American children are lactose intolerant. Cow's milk contains saturated fat and inflammatory whey and casein proteins, and hormones (estrogen's) from the lactating cow which are harmful, as cow's milk increases levels of estrogens in girls and boys, and decreases levels of testosterone in boys. See: [Michael Klaper, MD | Dairy \(doctorklaper.com\)](http://doctorklaper.com)

### Why is a plant-based option important?

1. **Obesity: a Public Health Crisis:** (but solvable), with a plant-based diet.
2. **Type II Diabetes:** preventable and reversible with a plant-based diet.
3. **Heart Disease:** preventable and reversible with a plant-based diet.
4. **Cancer:** The World Health Organization has recognized meat and especially processed meat as carcinogens, cancer causing agents, with processed meat in the Group 1A category, the same category as cigarette smoking and asbestos. Plant based eating reduces your risk of cancer.
5. **Acne and asthma:** can improve with a plant-based diet.
6. **Erectile dysfunction:** can improve with a plant-based diet.
7. **Gut microbiome:** improves with a plant-based diet.
8. **Pollution:** improves with a plant-based diet.

- 
9. **Greenhouse gas emissions:** improve with a plant-based diet.
  10. **Land stewardship:** improves with plant-based eating.

The **American Heart Association** now recognizes the health benefits of eating plant-based: “Eating plant-based, meatless meals a few times a week can lower your cholesterol and improve your heart health. Meatless meals are better for your health, the planet, and your budget.”  
*Heart.org, How does Plant-Forward (Plant-Based) Eating Benefit Your Health?*

The American Heart Association goes on to say: “Meat is often loaded with cholesterol and saturated fat, which have starring roles in poor heart health.”

**I urge the committee to pass this bill.**

Thank you,  
Stephanie Skow, MD

*Please see the attachment for supporting information.*

## ATTACHMENT

### **Benefits and nutrients in plant-based foods:**

Essential nutrients found in plants include non-heme iron, all essential amino acids, the highest quality protein, since plant protein is packed with fiber and antioxidants. Meat protein is packed with cholesterol and saturated fat.

Plants also contain folate, potassium, Mg, Ca, and polyphenols, and antioxidants, and pre-biotics, pro-biotics, and vitamins, including vitamin C, which is not found in meat; and zinc, selenium, and iodine.

“Heme iron (found in meat) has been shown to be associated with many health outcomes such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, fatal coronary heart disease, and cancer.” BMJ, British Medical Journal, 2017. “High heme intake is associated with increased risk of several cancers, including colorectal cancer, pancreatic cancer, and lung cancer.” *Nutrients, 2014 Mar 13;6(3):1080-102.*

In addition, forever chemicals that are found throughout the environment, such as dioxins, are stored in fatty tissues of animals, and thus humans, also cause disease.

### **Free range and regenerative grazing:**

Grazing **increases** greenhouse gas emissions with the methane produced from the cow’s burping. “Methane released directly into the atmosphere is [more than 80 times](#) more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> over a 20-year time horizon. However, as methane’s atmospheric lifespan is relatively short – [10 to 12](#)

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[years](#) – actions to cut methane emissions **can yield the most immediate reduction in the rate of warming**, while also delivering air quality benefits.” *UNEP Oct. 2021*

“Raising livestock for human consumption uses nearly 70% of agricultural land, contributing to deforestation, biodiversity loss and water pollution.” *University of CO, Boulder*. Rewilding the cattle pastures and the crop lands used to grow animal feed will capture 8.1 billion metric tonnes of CO2 each year, freeing up 76% of agriculture land on the planet.

**It takes a lot less land to feed 8 billion humans vs. 88 billion land animals.**

**Environmental Stewardship:**

Transitioning to plant-based eating leads to ultimate stewardship of our lands, with rewilding and/or growing foods which are native to the islands, and do not create pollution, disease, and animal waste.

Rewilding programs contribute fire mitigation by restoring ecosystems to their natural states, reducing flammable vegetation, and promoting interactions between species.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 8:00:15 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives of the House Committee on Education,

I am testifying in support of HB328. Institutional procurement from an entity such as a DOE school can be leveraged to strongly support our agricultural efforts to increase the food security of Hawaii. The high number of regular meals, planned in advance, will support local agriculture by allowing Hawaii's farmers to plant knowing that there will be a customer to buy their product. It's a win-win as our students are able to eat healthy local foods and the monies spent will be kept in Hawaii by going to our local farmers.

However, that is not the main benefit of this bill in my opinion. The main benefit of this bill is that by authorizing and facilitating complex areas (or individual schools) to create their own farm to school (F2S) programs will allow a connectivity between the students and the farmers. These F2S programs will allow teachers and cafeteria workers to have an understanding of exactly where the food is coming from, allow curriculum to be formed by the teachers in order to familiarize students with the farmers, and have relationships being developed between the students and their food, something very needed in the world we live in today. Most of us, including myself, often eat food without knowing where it comes from or the farmers who put their sweat into growing or creating that food for us. This lack of understanding leads to a population who doesn't appreciate the food that we eat, and we don't have any understanding or interest in the efforts that was put into creating it. This eventually leads to another problem we face today, aging farmers with youth not interested in becoming farmers. We need new farmers, and this bill supports the development that will lead to youth being interested in producing our food again.

This is a win-win-win bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Hearing on Jan. 28 at 2:00 pm

**SUPPORTING HB 328**

My name is John Kawamoto, and I support this bill.

People in Hawaii and the U.S. are generally making mostly bad food choices, which in the long run often lead to chronic disease, such as cardiovascular disease, and premature death. There is compelling evidence that a diet of predominantly -- or even exclusively -- whole plant foods can promote health and even reverse certain diseases. In addition, a plant-based diet that is broadly adopted would benefit the planet environmentally and reduce animal cruelty.

This bill helps to create plant-based school lunch options for students in Hawaii's public schools. Currently, school lunches typically contain high proportions of highly processed food and meat (which includes chicken and pork). Offering students plant-based options would help them form healthy eating habits that have lifelong benefits.

This bill also promotes local agriculture by encouraging individual schools and school complexes to develop "farm to school" programs. Doing so would help the Department of Education reach its goal that by 2030, 30% of food served in public schools will consist of locally sourced products.

This bill is designed to help children form healthy lifelong eating habits and promote agriculture in Hawaii. I urge the committee to pass this bill

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 9:00:48 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kenneth Peck	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Kenneth Peck, and I am testifying in strong support of HB328, which advances the goals of providing locally sourced meals in schools and implementing plant-based meal options for Hawai‘i’s students.

The benefits outlined in this bill are numerous and directly align with the values of health, sustainability, and community development:

**1. Support for Local Agriculture and Economy:**

By requiring schools to achieve a target of 30% locally sourced food in school meals by 2030, this measure not only promotes fresher and healthier food options for students but also bolsters Hawai‘i’s agricultural economy. Programs like ‘Āina Pono have already demonstrated success in districts such as Mililani and Kohala, reducing food waste, cutting costs, and increasing student participation in meal programs. Expanding this model across the state will provide a consistent and reliable market for local farmers, creating jobs and supporting Hawai‘i’s efforts toward self-sustainability.

**2. Healthier Meal Options for Students:**

Diversifying school menus with minimally processed, plant-based meals promotes better health outcomes for students. Studies consistently show that plant-based diets reduce the risk of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and certain cancers. Furthermore, exposure to a variety of fresh, nutrient-rich foods during childhood fosters lifelong healthy eating habits.

**3. Environmental Benefits:**

Encouraging plant-based meal options aligns with Hawai‘i’s goals of sustainability and environmental stewardship. Plant-based diets have a significantly lower environmental footprint than diets centered on animal products. By offering plant-based options in schools, we can educate the next generation on making environmentally conscious decisions while contributing to climate change mitigation.

**4. Cultural and Educational Impact:**

This bill fosters a greater connection between students and their food sources by integrating locally sourced products and plant-based options into their daily meals. Hawai‘i’s keiki will learn the importance of supporting local farmers, sustainable food systems, and nutrition. This initiative has the potential to influence their choices far

beyond the classroom, helping to build a healthier, more sustainable future for the entire state.

Hawai'i has the opportunity to lead the nation in providing innovative and sustainable school meal programs. Programs like New York City's plant-based options and California's success with vegan menu integration have set strong precedents that Hawai'i can adapt to its unique agricultural and cultural environment.

HB328 is a forward-thinking measure that benefits students, local farmers, and the environment. I urge you to pass this bill to ensure that Hawai'i's schools are a model for health, sustainability, and community support.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Peck

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 6:41:11 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jennifer Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Representative Woodson, Vice Chair Representative La Chica and Members of the Committee on Education.

Please vote for HB328 to support the Hawaii farm to school initiative.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 6:44:51 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Daniela Escontrela	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB328 is both a wonderful and common-sense idea that supports our farmers and at the same time helps our keiki by providing local, fresh, healthy options. We know that by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and providing access to meals that contain less processed food, and more fruits and vegetables, we can help keiki reduce their risk for developing chronic diseases and improve their overall health.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 7:14:27 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Karin Hoida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a mother of three school-aged children in Hawaii public schools.

Mahalo for your consideration and honest intentions to act in the best interest of our keiki and the many generations to come. We put our trust in you in this position of power, and are grateful for your dedication to serve now, more than ever.

We hope you will make the decisions you know are right, even if your own long term job security in this temporary but most honorable position of service is jeopardized for doing so.

We have elected you to do your part to support positive changes in our community - even if you know they may be painful and perhaps unpopular to implement at first.

HB328 is both a wonderful and common-sense idea that supports our farmers and at the same time helps our keiki by providing local, fresh, healthy options. We know that by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and providing access to meals that contain less processed food, and more fruits and vegetables, we can help keiki reduce their risk for developing chronic diseases and improve their overall health.

Efforts to support our farmers builds our resiliency and avoids the greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from shipping food in for meals offered at public schools. In addition, it stimulates our economy by creating local jobs and supporting the growth of local agriculture. These efforts and more are the type of actions needed to move Hawaii to a decarbonized economy.

I was disappointed to learn that in-person visits to your office are considered more impactful than written testimony. Please act on behalf of all of us who are counting on you, knowing the vast majority of us won't be showing up in person, and many don't even know about this process, through no fault of their own. Please follow your conscience and know your decisions will have important and lasting impacts.

Mahalo nui loa!

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 8:30:31 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Zaden Jay Brub	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawaii is not self sustaining right now, and if we lost the ability to ship food to our island then we would be out of food in just a couple of days. Having school farms would be the first step in making Hawaii able to thrive by itself.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 8:41:42 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Durazzo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Efforts to support our farmers builds our resiliency and avoids the greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from shipping food in for meals offered at public schools. In addition, it stimulates our economy by creating local jobs and supporting the growth of local agriculture. These efforts and more are the type of actions needed to move Hawaii to a decarbonized economy.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 8:48:36 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sven Sorge	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting locally sourced food in school meals benefits our local agricultural sector, while providing students with nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Sadly, progress in Hawai'i's goals of sourcing 30% locally grown/produced food in school meals by 2023 has lagged. This bill seeks to incentivize schools to take action to meet the goals of the Aloha+ Challenge.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Additionally, children will have greater access to more culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, such as kalo, sweet potatoes and others while becoming more connected to where their food comes from. Access to healthier foods will also support better learning outcomes. Please support HB328.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 9:26:33 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
William Hoida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a father of three children in the Hawaii public school system here on Maui, I strongly support HB328. Establishing a local network to get Hawaii farm fresh food into our school lunches, with an emphasis on plant based dishes, is good for the environment, local farmers/businesses and most importantly our Keiki.

Mahalo!

Willy Hoida

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 9:35:15 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Melissa Barker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Committee Members,

I am writing to respectfully ask that you support HB328 which requires the Department of Education to authorize and facilitate complex areas or individual department schools to form their own farm to school meal programs through partnerships to meet the local farm to school meal goal of thirty per cent of food served in the school to consist of locally sourced products by 2030. Allows the Department of Education to establish a plant-based meal program no later than the 2026-2027 school year.

Leveraging the power of public procurement to increase markets for Hawaii's farmers and producers is one critical way Hawai'i can support local producers while decreasing dependency on imports.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this request.

Melissa Barker

Kapaa, HI

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 9:43:14 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Keila Paahana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 11:19:17 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Glenn Choy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill

Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Education

Tuesday, January 28, 2025 2pm  
Hawaii State Capitol

Support for H.B. No.328

Aloha, Chair Woodson and Members of the House Committee on Education,  
My name is Jenny Kuwahara and I am a teacher at Mililani High School. I am testifying  
**in support of H.B.No. 328.**

I am testifying specifically in support of the plant-based meal part of the bill and support changing the wording to shall. I believe it is necessary to implement this part of the bill for the health of the environment and the youth who depend on school meals. Highly processed foods imported foods procured in our industrial food system means that they are directly impacting the health of our students and perpetuating support of an environmentally destructive food system. Whole food plant-based meals need to be reintroduced to our diets and our schools should be morally obligated to set students up for a healthy future. The long term benefits far outweigh the short-term potential inconvenience some may feel implementing this change will have on the current system.

I also feel it is necessary to add wording to the bill that exempts the schools that are participating in the plant-based option from any detrimental impact to their staffing based on meal counts. This will help make the program successful and sustainable.

I hope you will consider passing H.B. No. 328 because it is necessary to move our state towards a more sustainable, food secure, and healthy future. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Kuwahara  
Mililani High School

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 12:15:58 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lana Brodziak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Woodson and Members of the Education Committee,

HB328 is a straightforward yet impactful proposal that serves two vital purposes: supporting our farmers and ensuring our keiki have access to fresh, local, and healthy meal options. By providing meals rich in fruits and vegetables and less reliant on processed foods, this bill takes meaningful steps toward reducing the risk of chronic diseases and improving the health and well-being of Hawaii’s youth. Promoting healthy lifestyles at an early age is not just a benefit to individuals but to the state as a whole.

Moreover, this initiative strengthens Hawaii’s resilience by reducing reliance on imported food and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with shipping. Supporting local farmers not only builds a robust agricultural sector but also stimulates our economy by creating jobs and fostering sustainable practices. HB328 represents the kind of forward-thinking legislation needed to guide Hawaii toward a decarbonized economy while nourishing the land and its people.

Mahalo for your support of HB328.

To: Hon. Chair Justin Woodson, Hon. Vice Chair Trish La Chica, and Hon. Members of the Committee on Education  
From: Victoria Anderson  
Re: Hearing **HB328 RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS**

Hearing: Tuesday January 28, 2025 2:00 p.m.

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee on Education:

Please support this valuable bill. Providing plant-based meal options in schools, in addition to the myriad health benefits they provide, will hugely reduce carbon footprints, will take fewer resources from our remaining wildlife and conservation lands, and will be more inclusive of people with religious, ethical, or physical constraints (such as lactose intolerance, or restrictions against eating cows, pigs, chickens, and/or fishes.) On the health benefits front, here are some of the health benefits of plant-based meal options:

1. Fighting obesity, a public health crisis, and in itself a cause of at least 13 different cancers (citation 1)
2. Preventing and reversing Type II Diabetes (citation 2)
3. Preventing and reversing Heart Disease (citation 3)
4. Reducing Cancer Risk (citation 4)
5. Improving acne and asthma (citation 5)
6. Improving Erectile Dysfunction (citation 6)
7. Improving gut microbiome health (citation 7)

In brief, providing plant-based meal options for our keiki will improve their long-term health and the health of the planet.

Please amend the bill in 3 ways:

- 1) Rather than authorizing DOE to “facilitate complex areas or individual department schools that elect to provide a plant-based meal as an option under the school meals program”, please require the DOE to do this.
- 2) Remove a potential disincentive to trying a new program where staffing depends on meal counts, so schools can freely experiment with what works during the pilot phase.
- 3) Explicitly mention that the USDA now accepts some non-dairy milk substitutes like soy-milk for inclusion in a plant based meal option.

Mahalo nui loa!

Citations:

1. Pati, S., Irfan, W., Jameel, A., Ahmed, S., & Shahid, R. K. (2023). Obesity and cancer: a current overview of epidemiology, pathogenesis, outcomes, and management. *Cancers*, 15(2), 485

2. Toumpanakis, A., Turnbull, T., & Alba-Barba, I. (2018). Effectiveness of plant-based diets in promoting well-being in the management of type 2 diabetes: a systematic review. *BMJ Open Diabetes Research and Care*, *6*(1), e000534.
3. Salehin, S., Rasmussen, P., Mai, S., Mushtaq, M., Agarwal, M., Hasan, S. M., ... & Khalife, W. I. (2023). Plant based diet and its effect on cardiovascular disease. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *20*(4), 3337.
4. Godfray, H. C. J., Aveyard, P., Garnett, T., Hall, J. W., Key, T. J., Lorimer, J., ... & Jebb, S. A. (2018). Meat consumption, health, and the environment. *Science*, *361*(6399), eaam5324.
5. Fusano, M. (2023). Veganism in acne, atopic dermatitis, and psoriasis: Benefits of a plant-based diet. *Clinics in dermatology*, *41*(1), 122-126.
6. Carto, C., Pagalavan, M., Nackeeran, S., Blachman-Braun, R., Kresch, E., Kuchakulla, M., & Ramasamy, R. (2022). Consumption of a healthy plant-based diet is associated with a decreased risk of erectile dysfunction: a cross-sectional study of the national health and nutrition examination survey. *Urology*, *161*, 76-82.
7. Sidhu, S. R. K., Kok, C. W., Kunasegaran, T., & Ramadas, A. (2023). Effect of plant-based diets on gut microbiota: a systematic review of interventional studies. *Nutrients*, *15*(6), 1510.

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 12:55:51 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Katherine Skow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the Committee on Education,**

**I support bill HB328, with the 30% local food target and the plant-based lunch option for students.**

I firmly believe that introducing plant-based lunch options in schools is a major step towards a brighter future for our keiki and our planet. Plant-based meals are rich in essential nutrients necessary for the growth and development of young minds and bodies. As a former teacher, I often saw firsthand the negative effects of poor nutrition on my students' abilities, and the positive effects of more nutritious choices. Most of us grew up eating beef, chicken, pork, fish, and dairy products. Personally, I've experienced a lot of positive changes after transitioning to a whole food plant-based diet.

There are several compelling reasons to encourage plant-based options for everyone!

- 1) Obesity and Diabetes can be prevented and even reversed with a plant-based diet.
- 2) Heart Disease can be prevented and reversed too!
- 3) Cancer has been identified by the World Health Organization to be directly related to consumption of processed meats, in the same way that cigarette smoking causes cancer.
- 4) Other benefits include improvements in acne, asthma, and erectile dysfunction.
- 5) In addition to health benefits, a plant-based diet helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**I urge the committee to pass this bill.**

Mahalo for your time and attention to this important bill.

Katherine Skow

Kapa'a, HI



Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Education



Tuesday, January 28, 2025  
2:00PM, House conference room 309  
Hawaii State Capitol

Support for H.B. No.328

Aloha, Chair Woodson and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Bonnie Parker, I teach Sustainable Food Systems at Mililani High School, I am submitting testimony in support of the intent of HB 328 on behalf of my students:

My name is Riley Tateyama and I am a senior at Mililani High School. I am testifying in support of H.B.No. 328.

I believe that the health of my fellow students is important and the information written in to this bill was not shocking about how antinutritional the school food is. Between my peers I constantly hear school food is bad. School food has continued to have this negative connotation. All school food except private school. Everyone raves about private school lunches and I think it is comical that adults continue to think kids don't like vegetables. Students continue to rave about is Kamehameha School's fresh salad bar and how they have fresh food. By having fresh local food that is less processed more kids would eat it. I think having plant based options would be a great addition to support the health of kids growing up in Hawaii, but there needs to be standards to make sure to enforce what is considered plant based because plant based, highly processed foods are definitely not going to be a positive addition to kids diets.

I hope you will consider passing H.B. No. 328 because Hawaii communities would benefit greatly from this. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Sydney Yamamoto and I am a senior at Mililani High School. I am testifying **in support of** H.B.No. 328.

No one knew what the benefits were of the food that was being consumed and no one knew how it would impact us in our learning environment. While they did put the image of "The Nutrition Plate" Were they ever feeding us the right portions? With this bill it not only helps to provide an unique opportunity for students who don't eat meat to have school lunches but also provides an opportunity to give students a chance to learn about what they are eating and how it affects them in the classroom. Implementing plant based foods that could be local to many of the schools will help students to learn more about their cultures and the history that surrounds

them. But it also provides an opportunity to go deeper into what is in the foods as well as how it can help benefit them in the classroom,

I hope you will consider passing H.B. No. 328 because it helps to provide an unique opportunity for students who don't eat meat to have school lunches but also provides an opportunity to give students a chance to learn about what they are eating and how it affects them in the classroom.  
. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Eric Bemis and I am a junior at Mililani High School. I am testifying **in support of** H.B.No. 328.

My name is Asia Tsuruda and I am a senior at Mililani High School. I am testifying **in support of** H.B.No. 328.

I feel that improving the quality of school food is crucial for the health and well-being of students in Hawaii. Many of my peers, including myself, feel that the meals currently served at school are unappetizing and unhealthy. Having access to fresh, locally sourced, and plant-based food options would not only improve students' diets but also help us feel more connected to the agriculture of Hawaii knowing that our food is sustainably attained . These changes would encourage more students to eat school meals and promote better concentration and performance in class.

I hope you will consider passing H.B. No. 328 because it will benefit both students and the local community by providing healthier food options and supporting local farmers. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Eden Apana and I am a senior at Mililani High School. I am testifying **in support of/in support of the intent of/in opposition of** H.B.No. 328.

In a family of people who don't eat nearly as good as they should, I see why it's important to have a good diet. It would help a lot of students at schools be able to eat better at school if they can't at home. From my experience, it's easier to eat better when you're given more options and I believe it's the same for a lot of students at the school.

I hope you will consider passing H.B. No. 328 because I believe if students are given/are exposed to different foods, it could greatly benefit their life and health. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,  
Eden Apana  
Mililani High School

My name is Kalaniuoa Okano and I am a senior at Mililani High School. I am testifying **in support of** H.B.No. 328.

90% of food in Hawaii is imported into the state, and with the DOE is the largest purchaser of food in the state. If we got the school system to have a greater focus on buying from local farmers this will greatly help and encourage our local farmers here in the state.

I hope you will consider passing H.B. No. 328 because this will help not only our students but also our local farmers. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Quinn Sugahara and I am a senior at Mililani High School. I am testifying in support of the intent of H.B.No. 328.

With so much of our food imported from the mainland, a lot of that food isn't as fresh as the food we grow locally. Buying locally sourced foods helps our local farmers and it gives students the fresh local food they deserve.

I hope you will consider passing H.B. No. 328 because locally sourced food will not only benefit student health and wellbeing, but it will also spark pride in students when they know they eat food from the land they live on. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,  
Quinn Sugahara  
Mililani High School

As the largest institutional purchaser of food, we believe the DOE can lead the change needed to reduce our dependence on imported foods, support our local economy, and provide the most nutritious foods possible to our students. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Parker & the Sustainable Food Systems Class of Mililani High School

**LATE**

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 2:24:28 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Katherine T. Kupukaa	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I support HB328 support local farms & healthy school meals educating our students to follow a healthy lifestyle in reducing developing diseases such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease. Presently I lease 2 acres of prime agricultural land in Wahiawa. I am excited and believe a partnership can be formed to make this project happen.

**LATE**

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 2:41:04 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire	Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, HRM	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Testimony in Support of H.B. No. 328 - Enhancing School Meals with Local and Plant-Based Options

Dear Members of the Hawaii House of Representatives,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill No. 328, which seeks to revolutionize the nutritional landscape of Hawaii's public school meals by incorporating locally sourced food and introducing plant-based meal options. This initiative not only promises to enhance the health of our students but also supports local agriculture and contributes to environmental sustainability.

Support for Local Agriculture:

- By targeting 30% of school meals to be locally sourced by 2030, this bill will stimulate our local economy, support our farmers, and reduce the environmental impact of food transportation. It's an excellent strategy for fostering a sustainable food system within our communities.

Health Benefits:

- Introducing fresh, local, and plant-based foods into school cafeterias could significantly improve student health outcomes. The evidence from the Aina Pono program in Mililani and Kohala, which has shown increased meal participation and reduced food waste, underscores the potential benefits. Plant-based diets are known to decrease the risk of developing chronic diseases, offering our students a healthier future.

### Educational Value:

- This bill promotes educational opportunities beyond the classroom, teaching students about nutrition, the importance of local farming, and environmental stewardship. It's an investment in our youth's understanding of where their food comes from and the impact of their dietary choices.

### Community Engagement:

- Allowing schools to form partnerships for farm-to-school programs will strengthen community ties, providing students with real-world learning experiences that connect them with local producers and the land.

### Environmental Impact:

- The push towards plant-based meals aligns with global efforts to reduce our carbon footprint. By participating in this program, Hawaii's schools can lead by example in promoting sustainable practices.

### Implementation Considerations:

- While the initiative is commendable, it's crucial to address potential challenges in sourcing, staff training, and ensuring menu diversity to reflect our cultural richness. I urge the legislature to consider:
  - Providing sustained funding to support these programs long-term.
  - Investing in training for school staff to prepare nutritious, appealing meals from local and plant-based ingredients.
  - Ensuring cultural and dietary diversity in menu planning to meet the needs of all students.

### Looking Ahead:

- The temporary nature of the plant-based meal program until 2028 presents an opportunity for review and potential extension based on its success. I advocate for a long-term commitment to these healthful changes in our schools.

I wholeheartedly support H.B. No. 328 for its potential to transform our school meal programs into models of health, sustainability, and community support. Thank you for considering this testimony and for your commitment to the well-being of Hawaii's students.

Sincerely,

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire

Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, HRM

P.S. I've included my analysis of your HB328 below for you and your staff to review of pros and recommendations to impement to ensure success and sustainability for future genreations to come.

My Analysis of House Bill No. 328:

Overview of the Bill:

- Purpose: The bill aims to enhance the nutritional quality of school meals by promoting locally sourced food through farm-to-school programs and introducing a plant-based meal option in Hawaii public schools.
- Key Provisions:
  - Mandates that the Department of Education (DOE) enables schools or complex areas to develop their own farm-to-school programs to meet a 30% locally sourced food goal by 2030.
  - Authorizes the DOE to start a plant-based meal program in schools, with an emphasis on minimally processed, plant-based foods, starting in the 2026-2027 school year.
  - Requires reporting on the progress and outcomes of the plant-based meal program.

Analysis:

Positive Aspects:

1. Support for Local Agriculture: By aiming for 30% of school meals to be locally sourced, the bill supports local farmers and potentially stimulates the local economy. It also reduces the carbon footprint associated with food transportation.

2. **Health Benefits:** Introducing more fresh, local, and plant-based options could lead to improved dietary habits among students, potentially decreasing the incidence of diet-related health issues like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.
3. **Educational Opportunities:** The bill supports educational initiatives where students learn about food sources, nutrition, and environmental impacts, fostering a more informed generation about sustainable living.
4. **Community Engagement:** Encouraging partnerships with nonprofits or private entities for farm-to-school programs can strengthen community ties and provide real-world learning experiences.
5. **Environmental Impact:** Promoting plant-based meals contributes to environmental sustainability by reducing the demand for resource-intensive animal agriculture.

#### Areas for Improvement or Concerns:

1. **Implementation Challenges:**
  - Schools might face logistical challenges in sourcing sufficient local produce, especially in remote or less agriculturally diverse areas.
  - There could be resistance or logistical issues in transitioning to plant-based meals, including staff training, menu planning, and student acceptance.
2. **Cost Implications:**
  - While local sourcing might reduce some costs, initiating and maintaining these programs could require additional funding for infrastructure, training, or if local produce is more expensive than imported goods.
3. **Sustainability of Programs:**
  - The plant-based meal program is set to end in 2028 unless renewed, which could disrupt continuity if it proves successful but lacks further legislative support.
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
  - The bill proposes tracking metrics but does not detail how data will be used to adjust or improve the programs. More specific guidelines on evaluation might be useful.
5. **Cultural and Dietary Diversity:**
  - Ensuring that plant-based options cater to the diverse cultural backgrounds of students in Hawaii will be crucial for acceptance and nutritional adequacy.

#### Recommendations:

- Utilize Certified Kitchens to have the children in schools be able to farm, grow, produce, and eat their own food. Copy Japan! Do Not Re-invent the Wheel! Grow Your Own Food & Teach The Children when they are young to "Malama Ke Aina"
- Funding Assurance: Ensure there's a plan for sustained funding for both the farm-to-school and plant-based meal programs beyond initial setup costs.
- Community and Cultural Integration: Involve local communities, especially cultural leaders, in menu planning to ensure that meals reflect the diversity of Hawaii's population while meeting health and environmental goals.
- Education and Training: Invest in training for school staff on preparing nutritious, appealing plant-based and locally sourced meals.
- Long-term Commitment: Consider making the plant-based meal program permanent or at least extend its trial period to gather more comprehensive data on its impact.
- Flexibility and Support: Provide flexibility for schools in how they meet the 30% local sourcing goal, alongside support for schools in less agriculturally rich areas.

Conclusion:

- Overall Quality: This bill is very positive in its intent to improve student health, support local agriculture, and promote environmental consciousness. Its success, however, will depend on effective implementation, community acceptance, and ongoing legislative and financial support.

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**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 3:55:20 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Daniel C. Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB328 and agree with the benefits outlined in Section 1.

I am a big fan of breadfruit and it can be one of the local foods.

Daniel C. Smith

Pearl City

**LATE**

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 5:10:05 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Green	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our son Luca attends Kailua elementary and has Down syndrome. We have had quite a few issues with his digestion over the years and we found that a plant-based diet helps tremendously and eliminates the pain and issues he faced when on a standard diet. We currently provide all of his food from home and we would love to have the option for him to eat a school lunch instead.

**LATE**

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 7:08:37 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Keoni DeFranco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB328, which empowers schools to develop farm-to-school meal programs through partnerships to meet the goal of sourcing 30% of school meal ingredients locally by 2030. The bill also encourages the Department of Education to establish a plant-based meal program by the 2026-2027 school year.

This initiative benefits Hawai'i's agricultural sector by expanding markets for local farmers and reducing reliance on imports. It also provides students with healthier, culturally appropriate foods like kalo and sweet potatoes, fostering a deeper connection to their food sources and improving learning outcomes.

**LATE**

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 8:34:37 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! My name is Jennifer Lum and I am a public high school teacher in Pearl City. As an educator, I deeply understand the importance of providing our students with healthy and nutritious meals.

HB328 is a fantastic step in the right direction. This bill will:

- **Support Local Farmers:** By increasing the demand for locally grown produce, we can strengthen our local food system, support our farmers, and create jobs within our communities.
- **Enhance Student Health:** Fresh, locally sourced food offers numerous health benefits for our keiki. It improves access to nutritious meals, reduces reliance on processed foods, and promotes healthier eating habits.
- **Promote Sustainability:** Sourcing food locally reduces the environmental impact of transportation, minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting a more sustainable food system.
- **Empower Schools:** I believe that empowering schools to create their own farm-to-school programs, perhaps even incorporating school-based farms, will provide valuable learning opportunities for our students.

The inclusion of a plant-based meal program is a significant step forward. It provides healthy, delicious, and climate-friendly options for our students, fostering a more sustainable and compassionate food culture.

I urge the committee to support HB328. This bill is a win-win for our students, our farmers, and our environment.

Mahalo!

Jennifer Lum, 'Ewa Beach

**LATE**

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 11:47:48 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jeremy Garrett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Incorporating more locally produced food into school meals appears to have multiple potential, positive effects. 1) Decrease the amount of imported food to the state, 2) Promote and incentivize local farming, and 3) Locally produced food, in general, will require fewer synthetically produced preservatives and stabilizers thereby providing increased nutritional benefits to the children. I support this measure and strongly encourage its passage.

**LATE**

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 1:19:26 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carmela Resuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill - that will use the power of procurement to enable students to have access to locally sourced food.

**LATE**

**HB-328**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 8:16:59 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Makiilei Ishihara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

E kāko‘o aku au i kēia bila, no ka mea he kānāwai ko‘iko‘i kēia i ke kāko‘o ‘ana i nā mahi‘ai kaiāulu e ho‘olako ka mea ‘ai no nā haumāna.

I support this bill as essential legislation in supporting community farmers to supply locally grown produce for students.