

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 94

BY SENATOR HEITMEIER

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Agriculture and Forestry and the Department of Education to cooperatively implement a statewide Farm to School Program that assists schools with local procurement options for fresh fruit, vegetables, meats, and seafood.

WHEREAS, across the country an increasing number of schools and school districts have begun to source more foods locally and to provide complementary educational activities to students that emphasize food, farming, and nutrition; and

WHEREAS, this nationwide movement to enrich children's bodies and minds while supporting local economies is often referred to as the farm to school program; and

WHEREAS, the farm to school program encompasses efforts that bring local or regionally produced foods into school cafeterias; hands-on learning activities such as school gardening, farm visits, and culinary classes; and the integration of food-related education into the regular, standards-based classroom curriculum; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture supports such efforts through its farm to school program, which includes research, training, technical assistance, and grants; and

WHEREAS, according to the United States Department of Agriculture data, almost four thousand school districts across the nation are participating in farm to school activities and at least forty-six states have passed related legislation; and

WHEREAS, farm to school programs have become increasingly popular over the last decade for their ability to increase access to healthy, fresh foods and strengthen local economies; and

WHEREAS, stakeholders and policymakers can support a farm to school program by issuing guidelines for farmers and schools, forming farm to school task groups, conducting farm to school program pilots, encouraging schools to give local preference for food purchases, developing farm databases, appropriating funds for farm to school employees, and more; and

WHEREAS, farm to school programs require leaders in education and agriculture to work together in order to meet these goals; and

WHEREAS, only sixteen school districts in Louisiana have reported participating in farm to school program activities, but even in these schools, only fifteen percent of the money spent on school food was used for local food purchases on items such as fruit, milk, vegetables, seafood, and baked goods; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana is blessed with almost thirty thousand farms spanning eight million acres of land; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the National School Lunch Program served over ninety million lunches to Louisiana students; serving fresh locally produced products would be more nutritious for the students, and assist local farmers.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Agriculture and Forestry and the Department of Education to cooperatively study and implement a statewide farm to school program that assists schools with local procurement options for fresh fruit, vegetables, meats, and seafood.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in order to provide guidance to the legislature and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Agriculture and Forestry and the Department of Education shall establish a study group consisting of five employees of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry appointed by the commissioner and five employees of the Department of Education appointed by the superintendent.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study group shall convene stakeholders to identify barriers and existing resources for a statewide farm to school program, including the following:

1. Conduct a thorough inventory of small and large farmers and crops across the state.
2. Develop specific farm to school standards and guidelines for farmers and schools.
3. Develop a plan to provide discounts to small farmers for insurance requirements that will enable them to participate in a farm to school program.
4. Develop a plan to increase the number of processing sites that prepare and

package food products.

5. Develop a plan to ensure that schools have proper equipment to prepare food onsite.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this study group shall report its findings to the Legislature and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education no later than February 1, 2015.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the state Superintendent of Education, and the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES