

Rep. Melton offered the following resolution:

House Resolution No. 409.

A resolution to urge the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Department of Agriculture to take various actions to promote local farm-to-school initiatives.

Whereas, The purchase and consumption of local foods in schools can be a winning initiative for farmers, schools, and schoolchildren. Local purchasing expands markets for Michigan's farmers and food processors and keeps federal, state, and local dollars circulating in Michigan's economy. Schoolchildren benefit from eating fresher and more nutritious local foods. In addition, through the connection made with local farms, schoolchildren have the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the importance of food and agri-food systems, Michigan's second leading industry; and

Whereas, The state of Michigan needs to make farm-to-school programs a priority to ensure the success and quick dissemination of this beneficial and underutilized policy. To this end, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) should work cooperatively with each other and with key stakeholders, such as the Michigan Association of Agri-Science Educators, Michigan 4-H, Future Farmers of America, and the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at Michigan State University, to make farm-to-school initiatives a priority for the nutrition and education of Michigan's children and for the economic well-being of Michigan's farmers; and

Whereas, Local communities need financial assistance to get farm-to-school programs off the ground. The MDE and the MDA should develop farm-to-school grants that help match financial commitments made by local communities. In addition, the MDE and the MDA should use existing state-administered grants and loans to promote farm-to-school initiatives; and

Whereas, Many new initiatives fail because the roles and responsibilities of participating individuals and organizations are not clear and no one steps forward to champion the issue. Therefore, to ensure the success of the farm-to-school initiative, a lead state department should be identified and agreements between the MDE and the MDA should be developed to allocate clearly the responsibility of each department to track efforts and grants; and

Whereas, Michigan's efforts to establish food-to-school programs will be an uphill battle until changes are made to the federal food procurement process. The current process prohibits geographic preferences in food purchases for schools. In the 2008 federal farm bill, the U.S. Congress lifted this ban so that schools should be able to purchase locally grown and raised foods without risking the loss of critical federal funds. The MDE and the MDA should encourage Michigan's congressional delegation to partner with their colleagues from other states to follow through on these changes and ensure that they are implemented quickly; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we urge the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Department of Agriculture to take these actions to promote local farm-to-school initiatives; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the governor's office, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, the members of the State Board of Education, and the members of the Michigan Commission of Agriculture.