

Farm to School Package Passes House

A package of bills intended to provide more connections between the farm products grown in Michigan and the food kids eat in school received near unanimous support from the state House on Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2008.

The bills, [HB 6365](#) sponsored by Rep. Lee Gonzales (D-Flint), [HB 6366](#) sponsored by Rep. Geoff Hansen (R-Hart), [HB 6367](#) sponsored by Rep. Kathy Angerer (D-Dundee), and [HB 6368](#) sponsored by Rep. Jeff Mayes (D-Bay City) would:

- Increase the threshold for when schools must obtain formal competitive bids for food purchases from just under to \$20,000 to \$100,000.
- Put the state's "Select Michigan" program into statute and expand what Michigan products fall under the program.
- Create duties for the departments of Agriculture and Education to coordinate and provide information for farm-to-school initiatives. These include fresh food preparation training for schools; encouragement to schools to build kitchen facilities equipped for scratch cooking; and assistance to schools and farms to create business relationships, including how to use federal school lunch dollars for local purchases, *Select Michigan*, and online directories.

The following House Resolutions also passed the House:

- [\(HR\) 408](#), sponsored by Rep. Howard Walker (R-Traverse City): Proclaims October 5-11, 2008 as Michigan Harvest for Michigan Kids Week.
- [HR 409](#), sponsored by Rep. Tim Melton (D-Pontiac): Urges the Department of Education and Department of Agriculture to take various actions to promote local farm-to-school initiatives, including development of grant programs to assist local farm-to-school initiatives.
- [HR 413](#), sponsored by Rep. Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton): Urges Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to continue to promote and prioritize the establishment of local farm-to-school initiatives.
- [HR 421](#), sponsored by Rep. Geoff Hansen (R-Hart): Recognizes September 18, 2008 as Buy Fresh, Buy Local, Select Michigan Day.

Sources: Michigan House and Gongwer News Service