Aloha kākou,

Mahalo to the Hawai‘i Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, as well as the many organizers, speakers, volunteers and everyone else who made today’s event possible. The work that each of you do every day is so important to Hawai‘i’s families and communities, ensuring that our people improve and maintain their health through the basic building blocks of good nutrition. Today’s workshop is an opportunity for each of you to learn more about using the tools of public policy to better support your work, and to explore ways for our government and policymakers to work alongside you.

Here in Hawai‘i, we know that everything is interlinked—the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, and the nourishment in our food are all connected in such a large way to health, wellness, and the viability of our communities. The Native Hawaiians knew this to be true, and taught us basic principles of wellness, sustainability and conservation through the ahupua‘a system, using the fresh water running down the mountains, the fertile land that provided nourishment, and the ponds in the ocean to fish and play. Over time, we’ve lost sight of the fact that everything we truly need can be found right here in our islands, but slowly, we’re starting to see that resurgence of these basic principles come back to life, and there is such an opportunity for all of us to support and grow that mission.

Each of us has a part to play in improving the health and wellness of Hawai‘i. In Congress, I’ve cosponsored legislation like the Organic Agriculture Research Act, which would increase access to organic agriculture research, as well as legislation to increase access to organic agriculture for those on food stamps and our community that are most in need. There is a great need for us to continue increasing access to real, nourishing food, especially for our rural and underserved communities.

Throughout today’s workshop, I encourage you to engage and talk story with the different speakers, and with each other, to discuss challenges like these and more, as well as your different ideas, questions, and possible solutions. There’s no doubt that we need bold actions to address the many challenges facing our community, and each of you holds the expertise and keys to developing those actions right here today. Mahalo for your work and advocacy. I look forward to working alongside you to build a better future for our next generation.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

Tulsi Gabbard
Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard
Serving the People of Hawaii’s 2nd District

Presented on this 13th day of April 2018