

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 18 2025

RE: H.B. No. 773
H.D. 1
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Agriculture and Environment, to which was referred H.B. No. 773, H.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to appropriate funds for the establishment of grant specialist positions within the Department of Agriculture to assist farmers and ranchers in applying for, obtaining, and fulfilling the requirements of grants offered by the United States Department of Agriculture, State, counties, or private entities.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Agriculture; Ulupono Initiative; Local Food Coalition; Hawai'i Farm Bureau; Hawai'i Farmers Union United; Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.; Hawai'i Food+ Policy; Hawaii Food Industry Association; and two individuals.

Your Committee finds that there are many federal funding opportunities for agricultural purposes that remain untapped or overlooked due to a lack of procedural knowledge or adequate grant writing expertise. According to testimony received by your Committee, establishing and funding dedicated positions within the Department of Agriculture to assist grant applicants is extremely timely, not only to secure new funding for local farmers and



ranchers, but also to preserve existing grant funding amid current uncertainties at the federal level. This measure seeks to enhance the Department's capacity to assist local agricultural sector applicants to pursue and maximize the availability of federal funds to bolster the State's efforts towards food security and sustainability, while easing the burden of complex application procedures and compliance challenges on farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural operators who pursue grant funding.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2050, to encourage further discussion; and
- (2) Making a technical, nonsubstantive amendment for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

Your Committee notes that this measure contains an unspecified appropriation amount for the establishment of an unspecified number of full-time equivalent (FTE) grant specialist positions. Should your Committee on Ways and Means choose to deliberate on this measure, your Committee respectfully requests that it consider inserting an appropriation amount of \$200,000 for the establishment of two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) grant specialist positions within the Department of Agriculture.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture and Environment that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 773, H.D. 1, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 773, H.D. 1, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Agriculture and
Environment,



MIKE GABBARD, Chair



