

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



DEAN MINAKAMI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM
HAWAII HOUSING FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
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Statement of
DEAN MINAKAMI
Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation
Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

February 25, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 308

In consideration of
H.B. 1294 HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee.

HHFDC **supports** HB 1294 HD1, which establishes an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Department of Agriculture to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State. It also requires reports to the Legislature and appropriates funds. HHFDC supports the measure so long as it does not adversely impact priorities identified in the Executive Budget Request for FY 2026.

HHFDC is named as a member of the working group and agrees that collaboration would be a valuable way to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o
Hawaii'i*

SYLVIA J. LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ka Hope Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina
'o Hawaii'i*



KALI WATSON
CHAIRPERSON, HHC
Ka Luna Ho'okele

KATIE L. LAMBERT
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIR
Ka Hope Luna Ho'okele

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS
Ka 'Oihana 'Āina Ho'opulapula Hawaii'i

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TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIR
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
HEARING ON FEBRUARY 25, 2025 AT 10:00AM IN CR 308

HB 1294, HD 1, RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

February 24, 2025

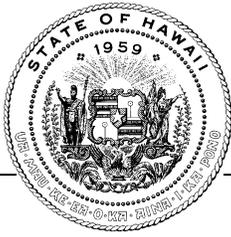
Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports** this bill which 1) establishes an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Department of Agriculture to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State, 2) requires reports to the Legislature, and 3) appropriates funds.

The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920, as amended, authorizes DHHL to lease agricultural lands or lands used for aquaculture purposes. DHHL has awarded 1,105 agricultural leases as of December 31, 2024 – 60 on Oahu, 64 on Maui, 406 in East Hawaii, 111 in West Hawaii, 46 on Kauai, and 418 on Molokai. DHHL also has 19,939 applications for an agricultural lease as of January 1, 2025 – 4,220 on Oahu, 4,840 on Maui, 7,410 on Hawaii Island, 2,327 on Kauai, and 1,142 on Molokai.

DHHL's General Plan Update dated November 2022 notes the following: "The connection to 'āina and ability to cultivate it and bring forth life is central to Prince Kūhiō's vision for the rehabilitation of Hawaiians. The first homestead pilot program focused on agriculture production as evidence that the Hawaiian Homesteads work. Today, agricultural homestead lots have the longest waitlists on all islands except for O'ahu." The Plan also provides that "the majority of agricultural applicants who responded (80%) indicated that they intend to farm and live (i.e., build a home) on their agricultural lot when awarded. The agricultural activities that applicants anticipated for their lots, once awarded, were mostly subsistence and gardening activities, while 11% of waitlist respondents anticipated using their agriculture lot for commercial farming." The Plan further explains that "DHHL is developing an Agriculture Program Plan to increase beneficiary capacity in farming. Programs will range from training in beginning farming to more advanced programs for commercial agriculture."

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.



**STATE OF HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF PLANNING
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ALICE EVANS
DIRECTOR

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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

10:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

in consideration of
HB 1294, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports** HB 1294, HD1, which would establish a multi-sector agricultural workforce housing working group to examine a range of tools and strategies to address the need for agricultural workforce housing in the State.

OPSD recognizes farmworker housing has been a long-standing concern for the agricultural sector in Hawai'i, and that overcoming the shortage of farmworker housing is vital to the long-term viability of agricultural producers. OPSD notes that HB 1013, HD1, an Administration bill, allows for farmer and farm worker cluster housing on lands designated as important agricultural lands that, if enacted, would provide a measure for addressing this issue.

OPSD stands ready to participate in the working group. Such a working group would be useful in determining how we, as a State, could collectively meet the industry's need for farmworker housing while protecting agricultural lands from non-agricultural residential uses.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HUI HO'OU LU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
February 25, 2025
10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

HOUSE BILL NO. 1294 HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Chairperson Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) **supports** House Bill No. 1294 HD1, which seeks to address the critical shortage of workforce housing for agricultural employees in Hawaii. This bill is an essential step toward supporting the agricultural sector, ensuring the stability of Hawaii's farming workforce, and promoting food security by enabling farmworkers to live closer to the lands they cultivate and care for. We also acknowledge and support the inclusion of ADC as a member of the proposed working group tasked with implementing this initiative, ensuring that workforce housing solutions align with the unique needs of farmers and agricultural employees across the state.

The Need for Workforce Housing in Agriculture

Hawaii's agricultural industry is a cornerstone of the state's economy, cultural heritage, and food security goals. However, the high cost of living, limited

affordable housing options, and lack of workforce housing near agricultural lands create significant barriers for farmworkers and their families.

Without adequate housing, many agricultural employees are forced to commute long distances or live in substandard conditions, contributing to worker shortages, increased operating costs for farmers, and decreased productivity. Workforce housing is critical for maintaining a reliable, skilled workforce that supports Hawaii's agriculture and food security initiatives.

How House Bill No. 1294 HD1 Supports Agricultural Employees and Employers

House Bill No. 1294 HD1, provides a framework to develop, incentivize, and facilitate the creation of workforce housing on or near agricultural lands, which will:

1. **Stabilize the Agricultural Workforce:** Providing affordable and accessible housing will help retain skilled workers, attract new talent to the agricultural sector, and reduce turnover rates that disrupt farm operations.
2. **Enhance Productivity:** By reducing commute times and ensuring workers have safe and stable living conditions, House Bill No. 1294 HD1, supports a more reliable and productive workforce, benefiting farmers and the agricultural economy.
3. **Support Food Security Goals:** A stable agricultural workforce is essential to achieving Hawaii's goal of doubling local food production by 2030, as outlined in the Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan.

4. **Reduce Barriers for Farmworkers:** Many farmworkers face financial challenges due to Hawaii's high cost of living. Workforce housing alleviates this burden, allowing workers to focus on their contributions to local food production.
5. **Create Opportunities for Rural Communities:** Workforce housing projects will stimulate economic development in rural areas, support local businesses, and strengthen community ties.

ADC's Role in the Working Group

The inclusion of ADC on the proposed working group is a critical component of the success of this initiative. As the state's lead agency for agricultural land management and development, ADC is uniquely positioned to bring its expertise and resources to the table.

In its role on the working group, ADC will:

- **Identify Suitable Sites:** Work to identify lands under its management that are appropriate for workforce housing projects, ensuring proximity to active agricultural operations.
- **Collaborate with Stakeholders:** Partner with farmers, housing developers, local governments, and community organizations to design and implement housing solutions that are affordable, sustainable, and compatible with agricultural land use.

- **Promote Sustainability:** Advocate for the integration of renewable energy, water-efficient systems, and environmentally responsible practices in workforce housing developments.
- **Ensure Agricultural Compatibility:** Ensure that housing developments on agricultural lands do not interfere with or reduce agricultural productivity.
- **Support Funding Efforts:** Collaborate on securing federal, state, and private funding to support the development and maintenance of workforce housing projects.

Alignment with Statewide Goals

House Bill No. 1294 HD1 aligns with several critical state priorities, including:

- **Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan:** Workforce housing supports the agricultural workforce needed to increase local food production and reduce reliance on imported goods.
- **Economic Development:** Stable housing for farmworkers fosters economic growth in rural communities and helps sustain local farming operations.
- **Social Equity:** Providing affordable housing ensures that farmworkers and their families can live with dignity, stability, and access to basic services.

Conclusion

The passage of House Bill No. 1294 HD1 is essential for addressing the housing needs of Hawaii's agricultural workforce and supporting the broader goals of food security, economic resilience, and sustainability. By investing in workforce housing and establishing a collaborative working group with ADC's involvement, Hawaii will strengthen its agricultural sector, support local farmers, and create opportunities for farmworkers to thrive.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of this measure.



LAND USE COMMISSION

Komikina Ho'ohana 'Āina

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

Ka 'Oihana Ho'omōhala Pā'oihana, 'Imi Wai wai a Ho'omāka'ika'i

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR

DANIEL E. ORODENKER
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Statement of
Daniel E. Orodenker
Executive Officer
State Land Use Commission

Before the
House Committee on Finance

Tuesday February 25, 2025
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Room 308 and Video Conference

In consideration of
HB1294 HD1

RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Chair Yamashita; Vice Chair Takenouchi; and members of the House Committee on Finance:

The proposed measure requires the Department of Agriculture (“DOA”) to establish an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group that includes the chairperson of the Land Use Commission (“LUC”).

The Land Use Commission (“LUC”) at its meeting held on February 5-6, 2025, discussed and has taken a position to support the intent of the measure to facilitate agricultural workforce housing and will participate as a member of the Working Group.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 25, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON HB 1294, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
10:00 AM

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 1294, HD1, which requires the Department of Agriculture to establish an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State.

HFB recognizes the need for agricultural workforce housing and believes that affordable housing is necessary to attract farm workers. This has been a major shortfall as we try to address the labor needs for agriculture and is a limiting factor for the growth of agriculture in Hawai'i.

The shortage of willing and able workers, the need for affordable housing for farm workers, and competition from alternative employment are several of the pressing farm-labor-related issues that need to be addressed.

The lack of affordable housing for farmers and farm labor impedes increasing food and non-food agricultural production in Hawai'i. There is a need to develop housing for farmers and farm employees while ensuring that the housing is used in conjunction with an active farm and occupied by bona fide farmers and farm employees.

An Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group can help identify the agricultural workforce housing needs in each County and help identify the barriers to meeting the housing needs for farm and ranch businesses in Hawai'i.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



February 24, 2025

To: Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and House Members of the Finance Committee,

Subject: **HB 1294**, Relating to Agricultural Workforce Housing

Aloha,

I am writing to express my **support** for HB 1294 HD 1, which seeks to establish more affordable housing opportunities for our state's agricultural workers. As seen in the amendments in HD 1 the establishment of the Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Department of Agriculture will provide a structured approach to addressing the housing needs of agricultural workers.

By focusing on this specific line of issue, the group can design pinpointed solutions that ensure that agricultural workers have access to safe and affordable housing, which is crucial for maintaining a stable and reliable workforce. With the backing of the Legislature as well as administrative support from the Department of Agriculture, this bill can create long-term strategies that not only will greatly improve the living conditions of workers, but also strengthen the sustainability and agricultural industry itself.

As someone who has spent a lot of time working on agricultural land in Waiāhole Valley, I have firsthand seen the importance of access to housing for farmers, and how imposition to housing opportunities for agricultural workers can be detrimental to the broader community that depends on their labor.

Access to farmer housing in Hawai'i must be addressed as a means to provide support and suitable living opportunities for many of Hawai'i's agricultural workers. The passing of this bill is important due to the role that our state's agricultural workforce places in the stability and access to food security for many local families. Ensuring that farmers have stable living conditions is critical to ensuring that our food security is being protected and maintained as Hawai'i's food security continues to grow.

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2025, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



**HAWAI'I
FOOD+
POLICY**

Honolulu, HI 96813
food@purplemaia.org

Mahalo nui for your consideration and review.

Mahalo,

Lea iaea & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2025, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



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Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Finance Committee,

The Hawai'i Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFU supports HB1294.**

The establishment of an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group by the Department of Agriculture, as outlined in HB1294, is a timely and necessary initiative for addressing the persistent shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in Hawaii. The agricultural sector is an essential pillar of our local economy, and the ability to provide adequate housing for farmworkers is crucial for sustaining and enhancing this industry. Safe, affordable, and accessible housing solutions directly improve the quality of life for agricultural workers, increase workforce stability, and support productivity on our farms.

Furthermore, the requirement for the Working Group to submit reports to the Legislature ensures that there will be ongoing assessment, accountability, and progress tracking of this initiative. By doing so, it creates an opportunity for continuous feedback and improvement, helping to make informed decisions that best serve our agricultural communities. Additionally, the appropriation of funds to support this endeavor signals a committed investment in addressing these longstanding issues, ultimately fostering a more resilient agricultural workforce and strengthening our local food systems.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union

HB-1294-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 7:17:18 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!

**HELP LOCAL FARMERS GROW MORE FOOD FOR HAWAII RESIDENTS AND TO
EXPAND THE EXPORT ECONOMY!**

MAHALO!

HB-1294-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:13:29 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kencho Gurung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill