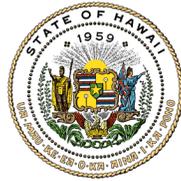


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KA Johana MAHI'AI
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
AND HOUSING**

**MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2025
1:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1294, HOUSE DRAFT 2
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING.**

Chairs Gabbard and Chang, Vice Chairs Richards and Hashimoto and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill No. 1294, House Draft 2 that establishes within the Department of Agriculture (Department) a 29-member Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group to address the “shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State”. The Department is to provide administrative support and co-chair the Task Force with the Agribusiness Development Corporation. The bill requires an interim report to the Legislature prior to the 2027 session and the final report by the 2028 session. There are two separate appropriations for FYs 25-26 and 26-27 to gather the necessary data and prepare the required report, including any consultation fees and related expenses. The Department appreciates this measure’s intent and offers **comments**.

The Department recommends that an early task of the Task Force, once established, is to gather data and information and survey farm operators to assess the realistic demand for farm workers. This information would inform a targeted rather than broad assessment of agricultural workforce housing needs. For instance, in 2022, 59 percent of Hawaii’s 6,569 farms (federal definition) made less than \$10,000 a year in revenue from agricultural product sales. We do not know if these lower-income farm operations are able to hire farm workers, much less afford building and operating on-farm worker housing or be able to participate in alternative worker housing. A possible solution may be congregate living facilities located in the vicinity of where these small farm operations are aggregated.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony.





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
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

235 S. Beretania Street, RM 406, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96804
Email Address: dbedt.luc.web@hawaii.gov

Telephone: (808) 587-3822
Fax: (808) 587-3827
Website: luc.hawaii.gov

Statement of
Daniel E. Orodener
Executive Officer
State Land Use Commission

Before the
**Senate Committees on
Agriculture and Environment
and
Housing**

Monday March 10, 2025
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Room 224 and Video Conference

In consideration of
HB1294 HD2

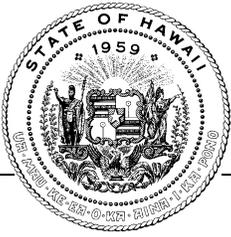
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Chairs Gabbard and Chang; Vice Chairs Richards and Hashimoto; and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment; and Housing:

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”) has taken a position to support measures to facilitate affordable agricultural workforce housing and will participate as a member of the Working Group.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ALICE EVANS
DIRECTOR

235 South Beretania Street, 6th Floor, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96804

Telephone: (808) 587-2846
Fax: (808) 587-2824
Web: <https://planning.hawaii.gov/>

Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
AND
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING**
Monday, March 10, 2025
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

in consideration of
HB 1294, HD2
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Chairs Gabbard and Chang, Vice Chairs Richards and Hashimoto, and Members of the Committees.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports** HB 1294, HD2, 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.

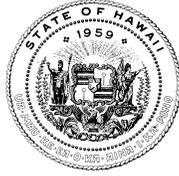
OPSD recognizes farmworker housing has been a long-standing concern for the agricultural sector in Hawai'i, and that overcoming the shortage of farmworker housing is vital to the long-term viability of agricultural producers.

OPSD 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
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o
Hawaii*

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



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

P. O. BOX 1879
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96805

TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIR
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
AND HOUSING
HEARING ON MARCH 10, 2025 AT 1:00PM IN CR 224

HB 1294, HD 2, RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

March 9, 2025

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and Chang, Vice Chairs Richards and Hashimoto, and Members of the Committees:

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.

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
677 QUEEN STREET, SUITE 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
FAX: (808) 587-0600

Statement of **DEAN MINAKAMI**

Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation
Before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT AND SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

March 10, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 224

In consideration of **H.B. 1294 HD2 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING.**

Chairs Gabbard and Chang, Vice Chairs Richards and Hashimoto, and members of the Committees.

HHFDC **supports** HB 1294 HD2, 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.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:58:16 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Crawford	Testifying for Hawaii Farmers Union, Hana Chapter	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

A shortage of workforce housing is one of the biggest challenges our local family farmers have to be able to sustain their farms and make them economically viable. This bill is a good step towards addressing that challenge, and supporting strong local food systems in the islands.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

March 10, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

TESTIMONY ON HB 1294, HD2
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and Chang, Vice-Chairs Richards and Hashimoto, and Members of the Committees:

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, HD2, 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.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO HOUSE BILL HB1294 HD2
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Senate Committee on Agriculture & Environment
Senate Committee on Housing

March 10, 2025

1:00 pm

Rm. 224

Aloha e Chairs Gabbard and Chang, Vice Chairs, Richards and Hashimoto , members of the committees:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in support of **HB1294 HD2** that works toward addressing the pressing issue of agricultural workforce housing in the state. The bill proposes the establishment of an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Department of Agriculture, tasked with identifying solutions to housing shortage and affordability for agricultural workers.

OHA appreciates that this measure will help to address the needs of stability and productivity of Hawai'i's agricultural industry. The provisions of the bill include the consideration of financial incentives, such as tax credit programs for agricultural employers who invest in housing solutions for their workforce. Additionally, the working group will study the feasibility of implementing a state income tax credit for investors who incur costs related to the construction, installation, acquisition, or rehabilitation of agricultural workforce housing. These provisions allow for

OHA recognizes that the bill promotes local agricultural and labor shortages in agriculture. For that reason, recommendations to build agricultural housing stock must emphasize its affordability with the goal of attracting skilled and stable farm workers and increasing farm income. Providing worker housing may not be considered a taxable benefit, so this enables the farmworker or ranch hand to receive a lower taxable wage rate because workers housing costs are available at a low- or no-cost, and workers commuting costs may be reduced or eliminated.

This measure is in alignment with The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) mission to improve the conditions of Native Hawaiians and ensure their equitable access to housing, aina mamona, and economic opportunities. It reflects our commitment to advancing the well-being of our beneficiaries and the broader community. This measure will help to

improve living conditions for agricultural workers and increase food security and sustainability for Hawaii.

OHA urges the Committees to **PASS HB1294 HD2** establishing a working group to support agriculture and affordable housing . Mahalo nui.



Officers

Kaipō Kekona
State President

Anabella Bruch
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Chapter Presidents

Clarence Baber
Kohala, Hawai'i

Tony Vera
East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Andrea Drayer
Ka'u, Hawai'i

Maureen Datta
Kona, Hawai'i

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahālāwai,
Maui

Kaipō Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Kilia Avelino-Purdy
Moloka'i

Negus Manna
Lāna'i

India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i

Aloha Chairs Gabbard & Chang, Vice Chairs Richards & Hashimoto, and Members of the Committees,

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 strongly supports HB1294.**

HB1294 proposes the formation of an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Hawaii Department of Agriculture to tackle the persistent shortage of farmworker housing. Providing affordable and adequate housing is essential for the stability and productivity of Hawaii's agricultural sector. By assessing current policies, identifying housing needs, and exploring partnerships, the working group can develop targeted solutions to improve workforce retention and support farm operations.

A key focus of the working group should be exploring innovative housing models, including cooperative housing and on-farm housing solutions tailored for seasonal workers. Proposed policy changes must balance housing needs with the preservation of agricultural lands to sustain long-term food production. Financial incentives, such as tax credits and subsidies, should be structured to provide benefits to farms of various sizes, ensuring equitable access to resources for improving workforce housing. Expanding access to financing tools will further support farmers in implementing sustainable housing solutions that meet both regulatory and operational needs.

To ensure accountability and long-term impact, HB1294 requires the working group to submit interim and final reports to the Legislature. With a strong commitment to sustainability, inclusivity, and practical feasibility, this initiative has the potential to address a critical challenge for Hawaii's agricultural workforce and contribute to a more resilient local food system.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



March 9 2025

To: Chair Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Tim Richards III, Chair Stanley Chang, Vice Chair Troy Hashimoto, and Senate Committee Members for Agriculture & Environment and Housing

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

Aloha,

I am writing to express my **support** for HB 1294 HD 2, which seeks to establish more affordable housing opportunities for our state's agricultural workers. As seen in the amendments in HD 2 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.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 3:06:04 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Fox	Testifying for Malama Kaua'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This has been one of our farmers' consistent requests for support for over a decade. With the increase in agricultural related theft, high cost of living, shortage of workers, and the many other issues our farmer's face, we must address housing head-on and come up with immediate solutions. Having on-farm housing would support farmers with these and many other challenges, and help to stabilize their businesses for increased food production statewide. Please support this needed step forward! Mahalo for your consideration.



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT and HOUSING

HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 224

Monday, March 10, 2025, 1:00 P.M.

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair
Members of the committee on Agriculture and Environment
To The Honorable Senator Stanley Chang, Chair
The Honorable Senator Troy N. Hashimoto, Vice Chair
Members of the committee on Housing

SUPPORT HB1294 HD2 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

The Maui Chamber of Commerce **SUPPORTS HB1294 HD2** 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.

The Chamber recognizes the significant need for agricultural workforce housing and believes that affordable housing is essential to attract and retain farm workers. This shortage has been a major impediment to meeting the labor needs of agriculture and limits agricultural growth in Hawai'i. The lack of available workers, the need for affordable housing, and competition from other employment opportunities are key farm-labor issues that must be addressed.

The lack of affordable housing for farmers and farm labor hinders the increase in food and non-food agricultural production in Hawai'i. Developing suitable housing for farmers and farm employees is crucial, while ensuring that the housing is used in conjunction with active farming operations and occupied by bona fide farmers and farm employees.

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

We wholeheartedly support initiatives that promote our local businesses and farmers.

For these reasons we **SUPPORT HB1294 HD2** and respectfully request its passage.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:26:53 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Colehour Bondera	Testifying for Kanalani Ohana Farm	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members:

Please support this important piece of legislation.

Farms like that of our family cannot locate helpers since there is no housing available for farm helpers and this is needed around Hawaii.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Colehour Bondera

KANALANI OHANA FARM

colemel2@gmail.com

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 9:00:06 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan B Roberts Emery	Testifying for Green Party of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and Chang, Vice Chairs Richards and Hashimoto, and Members of Committee,

My name is Susan RobertsEmery, I am Co-chair of the Green Party of Hawai'i. On behalf of the Green Party of Hawai'i, we are in support of HB1294 HD2. As a farm worker myself I understand the often times low wages of a farm worker. We need to do better to attract workers. A working group is the first step to aid in navigating the state and county regulations to help us come up with housing solutions.

Please pass HB1294 HD2.

Sincerely,

Susan RobertsEmery
Green Party of Hawai'i
Paauilo

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 9:37:07 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
laurel brier	Testifying for Kauai Climate Action Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If the State intends to address the important issue food sovereignty, reduce our need to import food, and support the agricultural economy, the long standing issue of farm worker housing needs to be addressed. The State needs to take necessary steps at long last to help overcome the obstacles of agricultural workforce housing. Strong support for HB1294. Reducing the importation of food helps us reduce our carbon footprint.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/6/2025 6:03:00 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John R. Gordines	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Need Ag worker housing desperately!

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 7:52:02 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Lack of affordable housing is a critical shortcoming that is driving away working- and middle-class families from Hawaii. This exodus of people weakens us socially and leaves us less economically resilient. Our agricultural sector is particularly vulnerable.

I urge this Committee to continue SUPPORTING this bill!

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:49:41 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions. Please support this important bill. Mahalo.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 5:53:32 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emelia Briscoe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 1:45:54 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg Crawford	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 3:29:59 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert H. Pahia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Workforce housing is a required component in addressing food security

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 1:44:57 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:12:11 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eliei Starbright	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions. Eliei, Kapaa

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 5:45:06 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Chair and Committee Members,

Please support HB1294 HD2.

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

Mahalo.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 6:40:41 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiare Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

****Testimony in Support of House Bill 1294****

Aloha e nā Luna o ka Hale o nā Lunamaka‘āinana,

I am Tiare Smith, a Native Hawaiian resident of Kahalu‘u, O‘ahu, where I have resided for 45 years, tethered to this ‘āina through ancestry, stewardship, and a deep-seated commitment to its vitality. It is with both urgency and optimism that I submit this testimony in resolute support of House Bill 1294, an Act Relating to Agricultural Workforce Housing. This bill confronts a crisis that has long festered beneath the surface of Hawaii’s agrarian economy: the acute shortage of housing for our agricultural workers, a predicament that undermines the very foundation of our food security and cultural heritage.

For decades, I have observed the precipitous erosion of affordable living options for those who toil on our lands—workers whose labor ensures that kalo, ‘ulu, and other staples of our sustenance endure. The absence of proximate, dignified housing has disenfranchised these essential contributors, forcing many into untenable commutes or precarious living conditions that belie the aloha we profess as a state. HB 1294 astutely recognizes this as a systemic failing and proposes a remedy through the establishment of an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Department of Agriculture. This initiative is not merely pragmatic; it is a moral imperative, aligning with the Hawaiian principle of mālama ‘āina—caring for the land and those who cultivate it.

The composition of the working group, co-chaired by the Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture and the Chairperson of the Agribusiness Development Corporation, with representation from state and county leaders as well as agricultural stakeholders, reflects a sophisticated, multi-faceted approach. Its mandate—to assess housing needs, evaluate existing resources, revise zoning policies, explore partnerships, and propose financial incentives—demonstrates an intellectual rigor that promises actionable outcomes. By tasking this body with identifying adaptive reuse opportunities and studying tax credits for investors, HB 1294 lays the groundwork for innovative solutions that could transform fallow government assets into vibrant communities for our agricultural workforce.

As a resident of Kahalu‘u, I am keenly aware of the spatial and economic constraints that render housing near agricultural zones a persistent challenge. The bill’s focus on revising land use policies to permit construction near these areas or within mixed-use zones is a bold step toward

reconciling human needs with ecological integrity. Such measures would not only bolster our farmers' ability to thrive but also reduce the carbon footprint of their daily lives—a synergy that is anything but antithetical to Hawaii's sustainability goals. Moreover, the appropriation of funds for fiscal years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 ensures that this working group has the resources to fulfill its ambitious charge, delivering interim and final reports to the legislature by 2027 and 2028, respectively.

The stakes of inaction are profound. Without secure housing, our agricultural workforce—already strained by rising costs and labor shortages—faces a future of instability that threatens the resilience of our local food systems. HB 1294 offers a lifeline, a chance to honor the interdependence of our people and our 'āina. I urge the legislature to pass this bill with alacrity, appropriating the necessary funds to set this vital work in motion. To delay is to perpetuate a legacy of neglect; to act is to forge a path toward equity and abundance for all who call Hawaii home.

Me ka mahalo nui a me ke aloha,

Tiare Smith

Kahalu'u, O'ahu

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 7:59:18 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB1294 HD2, which will establish an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Department of Agriculture to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying viable solutions. Farmer housing in Hawai'i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. Helping the agricultural workforce will improve food security in Hawai'i.

Thank you

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 8:51:27 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Heithaus	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 8:43:21 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kate Paine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Much needed for housing relief and security relief for crops.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 11:24:02 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Barker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Members,

I am writing to respectfully ask that you support HB1294 HD2 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.

Thank you for your consideration and attention.

Melissa Barker

Kapaa, HI

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 8:32:57 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Nihipali	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Michele Nihipali

54-074 A Kam Hwy.

Hauula, HI 96717

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 9:45:25 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Stayton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB1294 HD2. Farmer housing in Hawai'i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai'i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai'i's local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

Thanks for your consideration,

Susan, Lawai, Kauai

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 11:43:24 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of this bill HB1294 HD2 because with housing prices being so high this is tough on our agricultural workforce, the people we are looking to in order to convert to more self-reliance for our food. This will be a good first step towards a more long-term housing goal. Mahalo.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 11:46:06 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joell Edwards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 1:23:12 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
robin knox	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support having ag worker housing on ag lands

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 2:19:00 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jotis Russell-Christian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 1:25:46 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marc-Anthony Gamboa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawaii. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i's local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

The time to invest in farmers housing is now.

If Hawaii's ports were critically damaged, say from a hurricane, the commercial food stock would last the state for a week. A week's worth of food stock is an insult to the people of Hawaii by their elected officials. Especially to the low-income citizens who already face the challenge of food insecurity on a daily basis. In order to increase the state's food reserves, Miles recommends utilizing the military, emergency management sectors, and food distributors.

30-40% of small farms are threatened because they cannot afford to comply with the demands of unfunded mandates, such as the Food Safety Modernization Act. Cabral recommends public and private investment in small farms, so that farmers can meet the strict measures and keep their homes. The State Legislature must adhere to Cabral's recommendations to provide more availability of long-term leases for farmers. With this government funded investment, they won't have to worry about the possibility of having to sell their farmland because of expensive, short term leases. Public investment in long-term leases near farmland will give small farmers peace of mind in knowing they can utilize their capital to meet the strict measures of the Food Safety Modernization Act.

If farmers aren't receiving adequate financial support from their government then they, like other industries in America, will be dominated by large corporations, looking to buy up their land. Small farms need the support of the Hawaii State Legislature. Our entire food industry depends on it.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 10:14:55 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelcy Durbin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1294, to create a workgroup to address agricultural workforce housing challenges. Hawaii needs to be more self-sufficient and one way to secure workforce is to offer housing.

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 7:47:03 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

Thank you,
Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:21:13 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann V Saffery	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha All,

Farmer housing in Hawai‘i is needed to address the affordable housing crisis and support the state's agricultural workforce. The stability of the agricultural workforce is important for food security in Hawai‘i. The stability of farmer housing is critical to growing Hawai‘i’s local food security. Given the complexity of navigating state and county regulations, a working group is a first step to identifying how to navigate viable solutions.

Mahalo,

Ann V Saffery

Honolulu, HI

HB-1294-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:36:45 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Gabbard, Vice Chair Senator Richards, iii, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment.

Please support HB 1294 HD 2 to assist with the shortage of agricultural workforce housing.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki and life long resident of Oahu