

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
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

JANUARY 29, 2025
9:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

HOUSE BILL NO. 47
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE

Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 47. The bill authorizes the Division of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture to adopt, amend, and repeal rules to develop an assessment and approval process to import and move aquatic livestock in the State. It requires the Aquaculture Program to develop a risk-based framework and biocontainment standards for the aquatic livestock assessment and approval process and make appropriations. The Department supports this bill.

By implementing more robust assessment processes, HB 47 promotes responsible and sustainable growth of Hawaii's aquaculture industry which has a rich history and significant potential for expansion. A risk-based framework would help evaluate potential risks associated with the movement of aquatic species and better balance industry growth while minimizing the negative impact on native species and ecosystems.

As such, the Department supports this measure. 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 COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS
January 29, 2025
9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

HOUSE BILL NO. 47
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE

Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 47, which authorizes the Division of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture to adopt, amend, and repeal rules to develop an assessment and approval process to import and move aquatic livestock in the State, in addition to . requiring the Aquaculture Program to develop a risk-based framework and biocontainment standards for the aquatic livestock assessment and approval process.

Hawai'i is home to some of the most unique and biodiverse marine ecosystems in the world. However, these ecosystems are highly sensitive to external influences, including the introduction of non-native aquatic species. Without a robust and comprehensive approval process, there is a significant risk of introducing invasive species, pathogens, or other harmful elements that could disrupt native habitats and harm our local fisheries. Such disruptions could have long-lasting consequences for both the environment and the communities that rely on these resources.

By establishing a clear and science-based assessment process, the our government can:

1. **Protect Native Species:** Ensure that imported aquatic livestock are thoroughly evaluated for their potential impact on Hawai'i's endemic species and ecosystems.
2. **Prevent the Spread of Diseases:** Minimize the risk of introducing aquatic diseases that could devastate local aquaculture operations and wild populations.
3. **Support Sustainable Aquaculture:** Provide a framework for responsible aquaculture practices, which are essential for Hawai'i's food security and economic growth.
4. **Enhance Regulatory Transparency:** Create a clear, efficient, and fair approval process that benefits both the industry and the public by providing predictable guidelines and reducing uncertainty.

In addition to these benefits, this initiative will foster collaboration among stakeholders, including scientists, aquaculture practitioners, conservationists, and policymakers. Such collaboration is essential to developing a process that balances economic opportunity with environmental stewardship.

As Hawai'i continues to face challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, and biodiversity loss, it is imperative that we take proactive steps to manage our natural resources responsibly. Developing a rigorous assessment and approval process for aquatic livestock importation and movement is a critical step in this direction.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.



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January 29, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 47
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Kahaloa, Vice-Chair Kusch, 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 47, which authorizes the Division of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture to adopt, amend, and repeal rules to develop an assessment and approval process to import and move aquatic livestock in the State and requires the Aquaculture Program to develop a risk-based framework and biocontainment standards for the aquatic livestock assessment and approval process.

Hawai'i's aquaculture industry farm gate value is \$89.6M, the second-highest contribution to the economy in diversified agriculture. Hawai'i's favorable climate and geography allow for inherent advantages benefitting aquaculture production.

The Legislature acknowledged the importance of Hawai'i's aquaculture industry by revitalizing the Aquaculture Development Program through Act 63, SLH 2019. However, more investment and research are needed in the aquaculture industry, including research into different types of aquaculture, aquaculture system optimization, and the economic implications of various methods of aquaculture production.

The transfer of aquaculture import oversight from Plant Industries to Animal Industries would place this process under direct veterinary oversight with standardized science-based assessment protocols. Such evaluations are increasingly important as disease, quarantine, and invasive species considerations become increasingly necessary to help safeguard the environment and existing industry from external risks.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.



Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Anabella Bruch
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Aloha Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems Committee,

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

The Hawaii 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. **HFUU supports HB47.**

As agriculture continues to evolve and adapt to contemporary challenges, it is crucial to embrace regulatory frameworks that prioritize sustainability and biosecurity. The proposed risk-based framework and biocontainment standards outlined in HB47 will ensure that Hawaii's ecosystems are protected while allowing farmers and aquaculture businesses to thrive. This bill empowers the Division of Animal Industry to develop robust rules that reflect the unique ecological and agricultural landscape of our islands, preventing potential invasive species threats that can arise from unregulated import activities.

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahālāwai,
Maui

HB47's provisions for appropriations demonstrate a commitment to effective implementation and oversight. By allocating resources towards the development of these necessary frameworks and standards, we not only ensure the protection of our local communities and natural resources but also pave the way for a sustainable future for aquaculture in Hawaii. This measure can lead to increased investment and innovation in local aquaculture operations and support economic growth and the local food economy.

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kilia Avelino-Purdy
Moloka'i

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF

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



Testimony Presented to
Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Rep. Kirstin Kahaloe, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair
Wednesday, January 29, 2025 9:30am
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
by

Ron Weidenbach, HAAA President

SUBJECT: Support for intent of HB47 – RELATING TO AQUACULTURE

Aloha Rep. Kahaloe, Chair, Rep. Kusch, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Aquaculture and Aquaponics Association (HAAA) was established in 1975 and represents aquaculture industry members statewide.

The HAAA supports the intent of HB47 which authorizes the DOA Division of Animal Industry to adopt, amend, and repeal rules to develop an assessment and approval process to import and move aquatic livestock in the State; requires the Aquaculture Program to develop a risk-based framework and biocontainment standards for the aquatic livestock assessment and approval process; and makes appropriations.

However, we respectfully request that Section 3 and Section 5 be amended to mandate that: 1) the development of the noted standards and the approval process be under the direction and oversight of the Division's State Aquaculture Veterinarian; and 2) that all pre-existing aquatic animal import permits previously vetted in public hearing and approved by the Plant and Animal Committee and the Board of Agriculture be carried forward to the Division of Animal Industry and remain in force, so as not to disrupt existing aquaculture operations and approved expansion plans and activities.

The requested aquaculture veterinary direction and oversight will help ensure that Hawaii's aquatic resources and aquaculture industry are well protected from imported and interisland biohazards, and help maintain the high level of environmental credibility that the Hawaii aquaculture industry has achieved through decades of cooperation with the State Aquaculture Veterinarian.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB47 and the requested amendment.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald P. Weidenbach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ronald P. Weidenbach