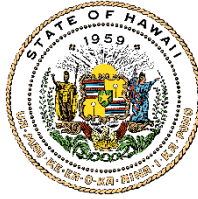


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of  
DAWN N. S. CHANG  
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Thursday, March 13, 2025  
1:01 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 534, HOUSE DRAFT 2  
RELATING TO LABELING REQUIREMENTS

House Bill 534, House Draft 2, proposes to prohibit the sale of any processed food item with raw ahi product as an ingredient in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill.**

Today's consumers are increasingly aware of the sourcing of their seafood, with many looking for insight into the quality, safety, and sustainability of products they purchase and consume. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) law (7 CFR Part 60) requires that seafood products be labeled with the country of origin. The COOL requirement does not apply to prepared foods offered for retail sale at food service establishments. This means that prepared products such as poke currently have no labeling requirement. This bill would extend country of origin labeling requirements for certain ahi tuna products at Hawai'i retail establishments, enabling consumers to make informed choices when purchasing seafood.

Yellowfin and bigeye tuna are highly migratory species that are managed at the international, national, and state levels. Internationally, fisheries targeting these species are managed by regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs), which set annual catch quotas for participating countries. Domestically, commercial landings of these species are closely monitored to ensure compliance with quotas established by RFMOs. The largest domestic fishery for ahi in the State, the Hawai'i longline fishery, is closely managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) through a limited entry permit system and strict regulations

DAWN N.S. CHANG  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
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LAND  
STATE PARKS

which include mandatory reporting, observer coverage, crew training, gear identification requirements, special area closures, and other measures to minimize impacts on bycatch and protected species. Fisheries that land tuna in other countries often lack this high level of management oversight.

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



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March 13, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

**TESTIMONY ON HB 534, HD2**  
RELATING TO LABELING REQUIREMENTS

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
1:01 PM

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice-Chair Wakai, 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 534, HD2**, which prohibits the sale of processed food item with raw ahi in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed.

Hawai'i is known for its high-quality ahi, which are caught under strict fishery management standards. Imported ahi, often caught under less stringent regulations, is sometimes misleadingly marketed as "Hawaiian" or "local." This measure ensures that consumers can distinguish between authentic Hawai'i-landed ahi and imported products.

Many consumers prefer to buy locally sourced food to support the local economy. Labeling processed ahi by country of origin gives them the necessary information to make informed choices.

We should protect Hawai'i's fishing industry, support local fishermen, and ensure consumer transparency by requiring country-of-origin labeling for processed ahi products.

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



Testimony to the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

Thursday, March 13, 2025, 1:01 PM

Testimony in Support of HB 534, Relating to Labeling Requirements

To: The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice-Chair  
Members of the Committee

My name is Stefanie Sakamoto, and I am testifying on behalf of Fishing Tales with Mike Sakamoto, a company that was founded by my father in 1985.

We are in strong support of HB 534, Relating to Labeling Requirements. This bill prohibits the sale of raw ahi and raw ahi products in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed.

The philosophy of Fishing Tales with Mike Sakamoto has always been to promote the culture of Hawaii and to share Mike's love for fish and fishing. In recent years, ahi (tuna) has seen a surge in popularity in culinary and online circles, and so it has become trendy to consume, photograph, and post online. This bill, HB 534, seeks simply to provide consumers with necessary information on the geographic origin of the tuna so that people know what they are buying and eating. Hawaii-caught ahi is special, and deserves to be labeled as such.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**LATE**

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Vincent Kimura  
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska  
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Decoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Senate Economic Development and Tourism 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 HB534.**

HB534 HD2 aims to enhance consumer transparency by requiring country-of-landing labeling for raw ahi products sold in retail establishments. This bill aligns with consumer right-to-know principles by ensuring buyers can easily distinguish between locally caught and imported ahi, addressing misleading marketing terms such as "fresh" or "locally made" when the product is actually previously frozen and imported. By mandating clear labeling, HB534 HD2 supports Hawaii's fishing industry by giving local fishers a competitive edge, increasing demand for sustainably caught ahi, and strengthening the state's seafood economy.

The National Farmers Union has been a leading advocate for mandatory country-of-origin labeling for decades, championing transparency for consumers and fairness for American farmers and ranchers. HB534 HD2 aligns with HFUU's commitment to strengthening local food economies and ensuring clear, accurate labeling for food products. By promoting fair market representation and consumer awareness, the bill benefits Hawaii's farmers, fishers, and businesses.

To enhance its effectiveness, HB534 HD2 should **clarify labeling requirements** by ensuring labels are conspicuous, standardized, and easy to read. A **phased implementation timeline** with Department of Agriculture guidelines and support for retail establishments will facilitate compliance, while a **consumer awareness campaign** should be included to educate the public on country-of-origin labeling and the benefits of purchasing local seafood.

Specific language is provided on the following page.

HB534 HD2 is a strong step toward improving consumer transparency and supporting Hawaii's local fishing industry. However, clarifications on labeling requirements, implementation guidelines, and consumer education will enhance its effectiveness. These amendments will ensure that the bill achieves its intended goals while providing practical pathways for compliance.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heaivilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union

## **Recommendations and Proposed Amendments**

### **Clarity on Labeling Requirements**

The current bill states that ahi products in processed food items must include the country of landing, but it should also specify how the label should appear to ensure consistency and visibility.

#### **Section 2 - Amended Subsection HRS §481B- (a):**

(a) No retail establishment shall keep, offer, display, expose for sale, or solicit for sale any raw ahi product that is an ingredient in a processed food item without a label placed in a conspicuous location that clearly states "Country of Landing: [Country]" in a font size no smaller than 12-point type, positioned near the price display or on the product packaging.

### **Implementation Guidelines**

The bill currently does not specify a timeline for implementation or offer guidance for businesses to comply. A phased approach could help ensure a smooth transition for retailers.

#### **Section 2- New subsection HRS §481B- (c):**

*(c) The Department of Agriculture shall establish compliance guidelines, including a phased implementation period of up to twelve (12) months, and shall provide outreach and support to retail establishments to ensure effective and timely adherence to this section.*

### **Consumer Awareness Campaign**

Education efforts should be included to ensure consumers understand the importance of country-of-landing labeling.

#### **Section 2- New subsection HRS §481B- (d):**

*(d) The Department of Agriculture shall develop a consumer awareness campaign to educate the public on country-of-origin labeling, the benefits of purchasing locally sourced seafood, and the distinctions between fresh and previously frozen imported ahi.*

**HB-534-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:29:03 PM

Testimony for EDT on 3/13/2025 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This will help us, as consumers, to avoid fish that has been processed with carbon monoxide, and to support local fishermen. I support HB534.

**HB-534-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 8:36:15 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/13/2025 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenny Yagodich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT for HB534 HD2 to prohibit the sale of any processed food item with raw ahi product as an ingredient in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed.



**HB-534-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 12:02:52 PM

Testimony for EDT on 3/13/2025 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Evans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senator DeCoite and the Economic Development Committee,

My name is Andrew Evans, I'm born and raised on the Windward side of Oahu, and as a environmental conservstion worker, I am particularly interested in the sustainability of our natural recourse and its ability to support our local economy. I am writing to encourage your committee to pass's HB534 and continue to support those measures that further refine the promotion of our local businesses and fishermen.

While there is great value in the established practices of labeling whole or raw seafood at grocery outlets, the benefit of labeling has been absolved when it comes to a great majority of our fish consumption—poke. This bill will play a pivotal role in promoting local fishing by requiring sufficient and transparent labeling in local prepared seafoods on our islands.

Although we will need further work and further regulation to better refine which fish we promote as "local" (i.e. fish that is actually caught in Hawaiian waters rather than just fish that is landed in Hawaii), and expand what businesses this labeling legislation applies to (expand to poke restaurants that purchase less fish than the \$230,000 minimum) and to apply to restaurants and preparations beyond poke, HB534 is an important step better direct our economy toward our local products.

Please continue to support our local businesses and our local island-caught fishermen.

Mahalo,

Andrew Evans

**HB-534-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 6:15:50 PM

Testimony for EDT on 3/13/2025 1:01:00 PM

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure.