

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 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2025
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308

HOUSE BILL NO. 782, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill No. 782, House Draft 1 that establishes within the Department of Agriculture (Department) an twelve-member Working Group to be chaired by the Chair of the Board of Agriculture to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture. There is an appropriation. The Department offers comments.

The measure identifies the following three issues that shall be considered for amending or repeal by the Working Group:

- (1) Restrictions on leases of State agricultural land that prohibit a residence on the property;
- (2) Restrictions on leases of State agricultural land that prohibit the raising of poultry and swine on the property; and
- (3) Caps on agricultural operation loan rates.

Other laws "pertaining to agriculture" that are possibly "unnecessary or obsolete" may be considered for review and recommendation by the Working Group.

The Department has concerns with respect to the initial issues to be considered by the Task Force. Both the Agricultural Resources Management and Agricultural Loan divisions do not concur that the issues of the operating loan cap, house building and raising of poultry and swine are unnecessary, obsolete or impede the growth and success of agriculture in Hawaii. In lieu of the proposed Working Group, the Department recommends that the Legislature commission a study to be done by a



neutral party such as the Legislative Reference Bureau to comprehensively, efficiently and unbiasedly determine the magnitude and extent of laws that qualify as unnecessary or obsolete and meriting amendment or repeal.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony.



February 18, 2025

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Support of HB 782, H.D. 1 Relating to Agriculture (Establishes within the Department of Agriculture [DOA] a working group to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000.)

**Thursday, February 20, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference**

The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawaii (LURF) is a private, non-profit research and trade association whose members include major Hawaii landowners, developers, and utility companies. LURF's mission is to advocate for reasonable, rational, and equitable land use planning, legislation and regulations that encourage well-planned economic growth and development, while safeguarding Hawaii's significant natural and cultural resources, and public health and safety.

LURF appreciates the opportunity to express its **support of HB 782, H.D. 1** and of the various agricultural stakeholder groups who defend the goals of viable agricultural operations and the conservation and protection of agriculture, including important agricultural lands in Hawaii.

HB 782, H.D. 1. The purpose of this measure is to establish a working group within the DOA to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture.

LURF's Position. In view of the intensifying impacts being cast upon agricultural conditions and operations by climate change, globalization, the influx of devastating invasive species and diseases, market conditions, lack of available labor, amongst other factors, the State must seek to update and amend its current laws and policies to effectively accommodate, support, and modernize the local agricultural industry.

LURF understands that outdated, and therefore unnecessary and inappropriate sections of the Hawaii Revised Statutes and agriculture-related policies are now having the negative effect of impeding efficient operations and may be retarding the growth and success of agriculture in Hawaii.

LURF members include farmers, ranchers, and landowners who own, maintain, and engage in agricultural enterprises, all of which believe that existing agricultural laws and policies must be reviewed and vetted to help sustain their businesses, and significantly heighten local food production in this State.

Agricultural stakeholders believe the review by a working group as proposed by HB 782, H.D. 1 will greatly assist in the efforts to achieve long-term sustainability of Hawaii's food supply and economic growth, and to ensure the survival and success of this critical component of the State's economy.

The purpose of this bill is also consistent with the underlying intent and objectives of the IAL laws (Hawaii Revised Statutes, Sections 205-41 to 52), which were enacted to fulfill the mandate in Article XI, Section 3, of the Hawaii State Constitution, "to conserve and protect agricultural lands, promote diversified agriculture, increase agricultural self-sufficiency and assure the availability of agriculturally suitable lands."

By recognizing the significance of, and need to assist the local agriculture industry, and implement measures which help to support the growth and maintenance of agriculture in the State, this bill significantly helps to promote economically viable agriculture and food self-sufficiency in Hawaii.

For the reasons stated above, LURF is in **support of HB 782, H.D. 1**, and respectfully urges your favorable consideration of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding this matter.



AHIKI ACRES

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

My name is Haley McKinnon and I am writing on behalf of Ahiki Acres, LLC, to support House Bill 782. This bill establishes a working group in the Department of Agriculture whose purpose is to recommend repeals and amendments for outdated laws relating to agriculture.

Ahiki Acres, a 6-acre vegetable farm located in Waimānalo, Hawai'i, has been providing fresh, high quality produce to the island of O'ahu since 2019. To meet the demand in the marketplace, the company recently bought a 5.77-acre, 20-year lease from the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture in 2022. With no agricultural background except for their training with GoFarm Hawai'i, my partner and I have acquired the skills, a network, and put in the work to build our business, currently generating \$250,000 per year. We sell most of our products at the Kailua Town Farmers' Market and partner with the following restaurants: Fête, Namikaze, and Island Vintage Coffee.

Unfortunately, acquiring an agricultural lease has been an arduous task and we continue to face challenges with our lease. We've already invested \$260K+ into building our farm and our lease has no option for us to extend when our lease ends in November 2042. As a young farmer (28 years old), I worry about the future of our farm. A dedicated working group has the potential to help us amend outdated agricultural laws and help us reach our goals in providing food for our community for years to come.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Haley McKinnon'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Haley McKinnon
Co-Owner
Ahiki Acres, LLC



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February 20, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON HB 782, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

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 782, HD1, which establishes a working group within the Department of Agriculture (DOA) to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture. This bill also appropriates funds to support the working group's efforts.

Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers face significant regulatory challenges that can hinder agricultural growth and innovation. Many existing agricultural laws and regulations were established decades ago and may no longer align with the needs of modern farming practices, advancements in technology, and the state's goal of increasing local food production. Conducting a thorough review of these laws will help identify outdated policies, streamline regulatory processes, and reduce unnecessary burdens on farmers and ranchers.

A dedicated working group will provide an opportunity for agricultural stakeholders, policymakers, and regulatory agencies to collaborate in identifying and addressing policies that may be hindering the growth of local agriculture. This effort will help ensure that Hawai'i's agricultural laws and policies are relevant, effective, and supportive of a resilient and sustainable food system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



EAST OAHU COUNTY FARM BUREAU
910 CALIFORNIA AVE., WAHIAWA, HI 96786

February 18, 2025

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair, and Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance
State Capitol, 415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

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

The East O'ahu County Farm Bureau, which represents approximately 420 farmers and supporters of agriculture from Waimanalo to Kahuku, **strongly supports HB 782 HD1**, "Relating to Agriculture," which would establish a working group to review laws pertaining to agriculture and to make recommendations for repealing or amending unnecessary or obsolete laws.

Many existing laws and policies unnecessarily restrict agricultural operations. Some of these rules date from plantation days and do not reflect the current realities of an extremely diverse industry which includes farms and ranches of different sizes raising many types of crops and livestock using different farming techniques. In order to support the growth of agriculture in Hawai'i and provide for greater food security, it is time for a comprehensive review of all laws and policies that affect agriculture. We therefore respectfully urge your Committee to pass HB 782 HD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter of great importance to Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

Frederick M. Mencher
for Grant Hamachi, President
East O'ahu County Farm Bureau

HB-782-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:48:25 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ronald Weidenbach	Hawaii Fish Company Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawaii Fish Company strongly supports HB782 HD1 but respectfully requests the addition of "livestock" to p. 3, (c) (2) 17 (2) Restrictions on leases of state agricultural land that prohibit the raising of LIVESTOCK poultry and swine on the 19 property;

Justification: The Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) recommends the use of livestock grazing to reduce and control invasive vegetation fuel load on Hawaii's agricultural lands. However, livestock are currently specifically prohibited on DOA diversified agriculture leases, only being allowed on pasture leases. Given the high agriculture and public need to mitigate wildfire risk, this inappropriate restriction needs to be rescinded if grazing is included in the lessee's Plan of Utilization and Development.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and request this critical one-word amendment.

HB-782-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 3:56:00 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Warren Watanabe	Maui County Farm Bureau	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Maui County Farm Bureau strongly supports HB782 HD1, Relating to Agriculture. Mahalo.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Thursday, February 20, 2025, at 2:00PM
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

RE: HB782 HD1 Relating to Agriculture

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

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 782 House Draft 1 (HB782 HD1) which establishes within the Department of Agriculture a working group to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture. Appropriates funds.

HB782 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for 21st Century Ag. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth, enhance workforce opportunities, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

Hawaii's agricultural industry faces numerous challenges, including climate change, globalization, invasive species, labor shortages, and restrictive regulations. Outdated or unnecessary laws may further hinder the growth and sustainability of local agriculture. To support modernization and long-term viability, a comprehensive review of existing agricultural policies is necessary to remove barriers and improve operational efficiency for farmers and ranchers.

This bill establishes a working group within the Department of Agriculture to review and recommend amendments or repeals of obsolete agricultural laws. The group will assess restrictions on state agricultural leases, loan rate caps, and other regulatory barriers that impede industry growth. By updating agricultural policies, the State can enhance local food production, strengthen economic resilience, and support sustainable farming practices. The Chamber supports this initiative as it reduces regulatory burdens, encourages innovation, and ensures a more competitive and thriving agricultural sector in Hawaii.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 782 HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-782-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 12:11:28 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randy Cabral	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

HB-782-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 12:16:02 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Theresa M Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 782 Which establishes within the Department of Agriculture a working group to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture.

Mahalo,

Theresa Thompson

HB-782-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 3:59:52 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT! THIS IS A GREAT IDEA THAT SHOULD BE EXPANDED EVERYWHERE! MAHALO!

HB-782-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 12:08:18 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amy Brinker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

HB-782-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 5:31:51 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
J Ashman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the intent of this bill.

Designating administrative agencies to be members of the working group may not be conducive to real change however.