

**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 AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
Friday, February 7, 2025, 9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

in consideration of
HB 967
RELATING TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS.

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

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports** HB 967, which establishes the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and the Interagency Food Systems Working Group within the Department of Agriculture.

OPSD is proud to have contributed to the Sustainable Food Systems Working Group, playing an active role in the development of an interagency food systems plan through the passage of Senate Resolution 111 in 2024. Our Statewide Sustainability Branch is responsible for and has long been dedicated to developing and promoting policies that align with Hawai'i's sustainability and climate goals, and we are committed to fostering sustainable food systems across the state.

We recognize the Department of Agriculture as a key partner in this transformational effort and are eager to continue our collaboration to advance resilient, sustainable food systems that will ensure the well-being of future generations in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important initiative.

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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Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2025
1:02 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224

HOUSE BILL NO. 967
RELATING TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify with comments and an amendment to House Bill No. 967 which establishes a Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and Interagency Food Systems Working Group within the Department of Agriculture.

Farmers face costs that are 40% higher on average than those faced by producers in the continental U.S. Biosecurity is driving those costs up every day.

Including local food in our school and state institutions has the potential to positively impact our local farmers as well as our keiki. The need to work together across agencies is paramount toward getting regional food kitchens off the ground.

As we see in those examples, multiple agencies are needed to coordinate on complex issues like biosecurity and school food - the same is true for many other complex issues Hawai'i farmers and the local food system faces such as land, capital and market access. Coordination is essential to make sure we work together effectively.

The Senate Resolution 111 Sustainable Food Systems working group has already completed a report outlining initial priorities for coordinating statewide food systems over the next year. A number of foundations supported this initial work.

The HDOA respectfully requests an appropriation and authorization to hire personnel in addition to the departmental resources that are to be committed to the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Team and the Interagency Food Systems



Working Group to ensure progress is made on key food systems issues like biosecurity and farm to school. HDOA proposes the following amendment to Section 3 of the bill (page 5, line 14 to page 6, line 13):

"SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of ~~\$944,100~~ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to be allocated for the purpose of hiring appropriately skilled personnel to supplement the Department's staff support to be assigned to the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Team and the Interagency Food Systems Working Group, and as follows:

- ~~(1) \$399,300 for the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) food system specialist position within the department of agriculture;~~
- ~~(2) \$253,400 for the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) policy analyst position within the department of agriculture;~~
- ~~(3) \$191,400 for the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) administrative assistant position within the department of agriculture; and~~
- (4) \$100,000 for the establishment and operation of the interagency food systems working group established pursuant to section 2 of this Act, to include conducting stakeholder coordination, public meetings, and information management.

The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department of agriculture for the purposes of this Act."

The HDOA is optimistic that the effort of the Working Group will result in a measurable, science-based, and functional Plan that will promote the State's highest priorities of increasing the economic viability of existing agricultural operations and assist in the establishment of new ones in direct support of increasing local food self-sufficiency and exports.

Thank you for your consideration and support for this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STEPHEN F. LOGAN
MAJOR GENERAL
ADJUTANT GENERAL
KA 'AKUKANA KENELALA

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
KAHU HO'OMALU PŪULIA

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
4204 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96816-4420

STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 967,
RELATING TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FEBRUARY 7, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a testimony to **COMMENT ON** House Bill 967.

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency believes in this legislative measure as it aligns with our mission to enhance emergency management preparedness and response throughout the state of Hawai'i.

We propose the establishment of an FTE position within HIEMA. This dedicated role would significantly bolster our operational capacity and facilitate effective coordination among various state agencies involved in food systems management. By having an assigned resource focused on this initiative, HIEMA would support ongoing preparedness efforts related to food distribution.

We appreciate your consideration of this proposal and believe that it will strengthen our collective ability to respond to emergencies and ensure food security for our communities. HIEMA supports this measure, with the understanding that its passage will not negatively impact on the priorities outlined in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 967.

James Barros: james.barros@hawaii.gov; 808-733-4300

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
February 7, 2025
9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

HOUSE BILL NO. 967
RELATING TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** of House Bill No. 967, which establishes the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and the Interagency Food Systems Working Group within the Department of Agriculture, of which a representative of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) would be a member.

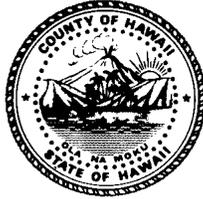
ADC is happy to continue working upon contributions made to the Sustainable Food Systems Working Group, as created through the passage of Senate Resolution 111, SLH 2024. This working group focuses on the farm-to-export pipeline, aligning inputs to the Food and Product Innovation Network, Department of Education's regional kitchens, and various Farm-to-State initiatives, in an effort to fulfill the mandate outlined in Act 151 to double local food production and exports by 2030.

We recognize the Hawaii Department of Agriculture as a key partner in this effort to create a more resilient and sustainable food system for the State,

and defer all decisions regarding positions and funding considerations related to this measure.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



Benson Medina
Director

Dennis Lin
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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February 5, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

FRIDAY, February 7, 2025
9:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

TESTIMONY ON HB 967
Relating to Sustainable Food Systems

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

I am Benson Medina, Director of the Department of Research and Development, County of Hawai'i. One of the agricultural objectives of this department is to "support collaboration, innovation, resource development, and programmatic sustainability throughout the food system to reduce food waste, improve producer viability and resilience, develop workforce development pathways, or increase access to locally produced food among low-income residents."

The County of Hawai'i provides written testimony in **SUPPORT of HB967** to establish the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and the Interagency Food Systems Working Group within the Department of Agriculture.

The Agriculture and Food Systems Program in the County of Hawai'i Department of Research and Development has been a longstanding partner with HDOA and supported the development of the Report of the Sustainable Food Systems Working Group in response to SR111, SD1, 2024 Legislature. Our department is in the process of facilitating community-led agriculture and food system planning to outline key strategies to support producers and improve food access. Connecting these community-level planning efforts to the interagency working group proposed in HB967 will streamline efforts to address our communities' most urgent and cross-agency issues.

The Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and the Interagency Food Systems Working Group proposed in HB967 provide crucial coordination functions across all state agencies and counties, increasing communication and efficiency throughout the food system. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of HB967**.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benson Medina".

Benson Medina
Director



Date: February 7, 2025

Subject: Hawai'i Foodbank in Support of HB 967 Relating to Food Systems

Aloha Chair Kahaloe, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, I express our support for HB 967, Relating to Food Systems. This bill Establishes the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and the Interagency Food Systems Working Group within the Department of Agriculture; requires reports to the Legislature; establishes positions; and appropriates funds.

As the state's largest hunger-relief organization, Hawai'i Foodbank has been committed to ensuring no one in Hawai'i goes hungry since 1983. We work with over 225 agency partners on O'ahu and Kaua'i to distribute food, and programs like Food 4 Keiki and 'Ohana Produce Plus provide nutritious meals to children and families. Last year, Hawai'i Foodbank provided food for 17.7 million meals and served an average of more than 150,000 people each month. In addition to addressing daily needs, our organization mobilizes during emergencies to provide immediate relief and aid long-term recovery efforts.

Food insecurity is a growing crisis in Hawai'i, with nearly 1 in 3 households struggling to access adequate food. One in ten households go a whole day without food some or most months. A statewide strategy developed in collaboration with partners across the food system is a necessary step to developing a more sustainable and resilient food system in Hawai'i, and we are supportive of this important effort.

With aloha,

Amy Miller
President and CEO, Hawai'i Foodbank



Officers

Kaipo 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

Kaipo 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 Chair Kahaloe, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems 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 HB967.**

HB697 proposes the establishment of the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and the Interagency Food Systems Working Group within the Department of Agriculture. This initiative is vital for fostering a comprehensive and integrated approach to enhancing Hawaii's food systems. By coordinating efforts across various sectors, the bill aims to address inefficiencies and foster collaboration that is essential for developing a resilient and sustainable agricultural environment in Hawaii. Encouraging collaborative efforts through these bodies will provide the necessary platform for stakeholders to align their resources, share valuable insights, and strategize effectively towards strengthening Hawaii's food infrastructure.

The appropriation of funds and establishment of dedicated positions demonstrate a commitment to sustaining these efforts for the long term. This financial backing is crucial for successful implementation and for enabling the working group and coordination team to carry out their mandates effectively. With a structured approach to monitoring and evaluating progress through regular reports to the Legislature, HB697 ensures that strategic adjustments can be made in a timely manner. Supporting this bill paves the way for a more synergized effort in enhancing food security, promoting local agriculture, and ultimately supporting our local farmers and communities in achieving a more sustainable food system for Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



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February 7, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 967
RELATING TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

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 967, which establishes the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and the Interagency Food Systems Working Group within the Department of Agriculture (DOA). This measure aims to improve coordination among state agencies to strengthen Hawai'i's food system, requires reports to the Legislature, establishes positions, and appropriates funds for its implementation.

A coordinated approach to food system development can help address challenges related to local food production, distribution, procurement, and market access. Farmers and ranchers often face regulatory barriers and logistical challenges that limit their ability to expand local food production. By facilitating collaboration between government agencies and agricultural stakeholders, this initiative has the potential to streamline policies, improve procurement processes, and increase opportunities for farmers to participate in state food programs such as Farm to School and Farm to State.

However, we have concerns regarding the proposed salary amounts for the new positions. Ensuring that salaries align with comparable state positions is necessary to maximize funding efficiency and ensure that resources are directed toward direct support for farmers and food producers rather than administrative overhead.

Additionally, there is uncertainty regarding who the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team reports to and where their authority is derived from. Clarification is needed to define their decision-making role, ensure accountability, and prevent

duplication of efforts with existing programs and agencies already working to improve Hawai'i's food system. Without clear oversight and guidance, the effectiveness of these teams may be limited.

To improve HB 967, we recommend:

- Ensuring that farmers and ranchers are actively represented in the working group to provide real-world perspectives on the challenges and opportunities within Hawai'i's food system.
- Adjusting salary levels to be consistent with similar positions within the DOA and other state agencies to ensure fiscal responsibility.
- Defining the reporting structure and decision-making authority of the coordination team and working group to ensure clear oversight and prevent redundancy.
- Developing clear performance metrics and accountability measures to assess the effectiveness of the coordination team and working group in improving food system outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS
Friday, February 7, 2025 — 9:30 a.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports HB 967, Relating to Sustainable Food Systems.

Dear Chair Kahaloa and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mariah Yoshizu, and I am the Government Affairs Associate at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food, renewable energy and clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono supports HB 967, which establishes the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and the Interagency Food Systems Working Group within the Department of Agriculture.

This legislation takes crucial steps toward strengthening Hawai'i's food security and resilience by establishing a coordinated, interagency approach to addressing our food system challenges. The creation of the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and Working Group will help break down silos and foster the collaboration needed to achieve the state's food sustainability goals.

The bill thoughtfully brings together key stakeholders from agriculture, education, health, planning, and other sectors to develop coordinated solutions while providing necessary resources through new dedicated positions. By investing in this integrated approach to food systems planning and implementation, we can make meaningful progress toward increasing local food production, improving food access, reducing waste, and building a more sustainable and equitable food system for Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Mariah Yoshizu
Government Affairs Associate

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i



February 6th, 2025

To: Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch and the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems,

Subject: **HB 967**, Relating to a sustainable food system.

Aloha,

I am writing in strong **support** of HB 967. This bill recognizes the critical need for addressing Hawai'i's food system through a coordinated and interagency approach. This bill is vital in establishing a more sustainable and resilient food system for our state.

[Senate Resolution 111, SD 1, 2024 Legislature Report of the Sustainable Food Systems Working Group](#) key recommendation is to establish a fully resourced process for statewide food systems coordination that builds equitably from county and moku-based engagement processes. The creation of these various groups will better help state agencies and community organizations to address numerous issues affecting our state's food security, such as sustainability and economic growth. Through the coordination of efforts, and a singular focus amongst these agencies; our state will be better to ensure that resources are properly utilized and that policies are implemented to benefit all communities.

Overall, the requirement for regular reports on this issue to the Legislature will provide transparency and allow a better means to track progress and make necessary adjustments.

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.

<https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/AGR-SR111-Sust-Food-System-WG.pdf>



The bill acknowledges that tackling food system challenges requires a multidisciplinary, collaborative effort that is firmly grounded in empirical data.

I urge the committee to pass HB 967. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

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.

<https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/AGR-SR111-Sust-Food-System-WG.pdf>

HB-967

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 9:36:29 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/7/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noa Lincoln	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill, which acknowledges the need for cross-agency collaboration and communication in addressing the challenges regarding agricultural development in our state.

HB-967

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 10:29:30 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/7/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniela Spoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am writing to express my support for HB967, relating to sustainable food systems.

It is long past time that Hawaii acknowledges the need for interagency coordination on our food system. Institutional procurement, federal nutrition funding, and initiatives to support local farmers are all occurring at varying agencies and levels of the state, and these efforts would be dramatically enhanced with dedicated coordination and support.

Thank you for hearing this bill.

HB-967

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 1:34:36 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/7/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joseph Wat	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha nui kākou,

I am writing in full support of a sustainable food systems coordination group. The significant barriers to local food production span business concerns, land access, water access, cost-of-living, housing capacity, and more. Without a coordinated effort there will be significant barriers to success.

One topic not addressed in this bill is invasive species. Whether it is albizia breaking powerlines and stopping water pumps from providing water for harvest and sanitization, Little Fire Ants discouraging our next generation of Hawai'i grown farmers, Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle/Two Line Spit Bug destroying a cultural resource and food crop, or the mirad of caterpillars, molds, and more destroying existing farm businesses and markets... invasive species have a significant impact on Hawai'i's capacity to host a sustainable and resilient food system.

While this may be beyond the scope of this bill, please share your attention with the invasive species and biosecurity issues that require consistent and significant funding.

Aloha nō,

- Joe