

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
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &
TECHNOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025
1:01 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 229

SENATE BILL NO. 522
RELATING TO THE HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL

Chairs DeCoite and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Wakai and Richards and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 522 that authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development.

The Department of Agriculture supports this measure and the continued revitalization of agriculture in North Kohala.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HUI HO'OULU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND TOURISM, & AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
February 11, 2025
1:01 p.m.
Conference Room 415 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 522
RELATING TO THE AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chairpersons DeCoite and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Wakai and Richards, and Members of the joint Committees:

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) **supports** Senate Bill No. 522, which authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development.

This land acquisition will expand ADC's agricultural footprint on Hawaii Island. The plan is to use farmable portions and infrastructure for diversified agriculture and provide farmers with long-term licenses. The inability to obtain long-term agreements and facilities have been identified as an ongoing in the agriculture industry.

We support this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in our Executive Budget. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



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

February 11, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

TESTIMONY ON SB 522
RELATING TO THE HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
1:01 PM

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice-Chair Wakai, 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 SB 522, which authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development. While we support the intent of this measure to expand agricultural opportunities for ADC, we encourage ADC to broaden its scope to consider potential land acquisitions in both Maui County and Hawai'i Island and to ensure that adequate water resources are available before purchasing any land for agricultural development.

The agricultural industry established the Agribusiness Development Corporation as sugar and pineapple downsized. It was created to help transition Hawai'i's agricultural industry from plantation agriculture to smaller, diversified agricultural operations. Over the past decade, ADC has made significant progress in transitioning Hawai'i's agricultural sector by managing key state agricultural lands, developing irrigation systems, and supporting diversified agriculture on Oahu and Kauai. Expanding ADC's role to additional lands is a logical next step, but due diligence must be done to ensure successful outcomes.

While Kohala offers potential for agricultural development, Maui County and other areas of Hawai'i Island also have significant agricultural potential. Purchasing land in Kohala is step in the right direction for expanding agricultural opportunities in Hawai'i. However, ensuring water access, considering multiple locations, and prioritizing infrastructure development are essential to the success of ADC's expansion.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



Testimony of Nathan Trump

Island Harvest Inc.

January 11th, 2025

RE: SB522 RELATING TO THE HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism,

I am Nathan Trump, writing on behalf of Island Harvest in support of Senate Bill 522 RELATING TO THE HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL.

Island Harvest is an organic macadamia nut farm located in North Kohala, with orchards less than 100 yards from the Halaula Agricultural Parcel. In addition to macadamia nuts, we grow breadfruit, limes, and raise sheep. As a farming company, we employ agricultural and business practices that contribute positively to our environment and community while ensuring that our farming team can work in a safe environment.

The purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel by ADC has the potential to open opportunities for Kohala's farmers and increase local food production. We've seen several talented farmers leave Kohala, or close their operations, because they were unable to secure farmland with adequate water or long enough lease terms to warrant significant investment.

ADC's potential acquisition of farmland in Kohala is a necessary first step for farmers to confidently start new agribusiness ventures and invest in soil building for the long term. Combined with the available skilled workforce, it directly supports Kohala's community by increasing local food production and providing economic development opportunities to local residents.

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Island Harvest and not in my capacity as board member on the Agribusiness Development Corporation's board of directors. I will recuse myself from any future action taken by the ADC board on this matter.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan Trump".

Nathan Trump

General Manager

Island Harvest Inc.



Surety Kohala Corporation

P.O. BOX 249 HAWI, HAWAII 96719 • TELEPHONE: (808) 889-6257 • FAX: (808) 889-5252

February 9, 2025

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism (EDT)

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Committee on Agriculture and Environment (AEN)

RE: SB 522 Hearing: Relating To The Halaula Agricultural Parcel

1:01 PM, Tuesday, February 11, 2025
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 229
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and Members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism:

My name is Bill Shontell, Executive Vice-President of Surety Kohala Corporation, the owner of the above-referenced parcel. I am submitting this testimony in **strong support** of SB 522.

North Kohala has struggled economically since the demise of Kohala Sugar in 1975. With the exception of tourism in South Kohala, few opportunities have emerged here to help restore the plantation's contributions to Kohala's families. SB 522, inspired by the struggles of the North Kohala community, will significantly stimulate agribusiness development and create employment opportunities for the families of Kohala.

Leveraging ADC's mission and resources to overcome the significant barriers preventing Kohala's farmers from accessing Kohala's rich soil is a visionary approach to a long standing problem.

Thank You for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Bill Shontell

Ex. Vice President, COO

SURETY KOHALA CORPORATION



"KEEP KOHALA, KOHALA"

Appendix A, as amended to Draft 2
ORDINANCE NO. 2008-151

North Kohala Community Development Plan Advisory Group

"Keep Kohala Kohala"



February 10, 2025

RE: SUPPORT FOR SB522 RELATING TO THE HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environments, and Economic Development and Tourism,

The North Kohala Community Development Plan Advisory Group oversees implementation of the 2008 NK-CDP and is in strong support of Senate Bill 522 that authorizes funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) for the purchase of the 50-acre Halaula Agricultural Parcel to promote local agricultural development.

Kohala has a perfect combination of mature soil and relatively abundant water, leading to a long history of successful agriculture. The North Kohala Community Development Plan established a goal of producing locally 50% of the food consumed. Nearly two decades later, this objective remains unmet while Hawaii imports 80-90% of its food. Land is expensive in Kohala and, although 85% is zoned Ag-20, much has gone into the hands of affluent non-farmers, and more remains in danger of being lost to outside developers. All of this while many prospective farmers cannot afford suitable land at the present costs.

This situation underscores the urgent need for strategic investment in our community's agricultural infrastructure to make land available to those wishing to grow food. A lack of available and stable farm leases and licenses has prevented the community from realizing its food production potential. The ADC has a demonstrated record of success in fostering agricultural development in other regions of the state, and we believe their involvement in this project provides an significant step toward achieving our local food security goals.

The purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel by ADC has the potential to open opportunities for Kohala's farmers and increase local food production, a longtime priority of our community that is clearly stated as such throughout the North Kohala Community Development Plan. The Halaula Agricultural Parcel is advantageous for agricultural development because it is relatively flat with fertile soil. It has a plantation era well that could be reactivated, and a highly skilled agricultural workforce that needs land and lives within 10 minutes of the parcel.

SB522 promotes Kohala's future by providing increased agricultural development and employment opportunities as well as local food for our families.

Mahalo for taking the time to consider the reasons behind our unanimous support for this bill.

Thank you.

John Winter, Chair

NORTH KOHALA COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

To Empower A Thriving North Kohala

DIRECTORS

Nathan Trump
President
General Manager

Jay Vega
Vice President
PID Organizer

Shani "Kai" Carvalho
Secretary
Public Relations Director

Todd Apo
Treasurer
CEO

Beth Bohn
Small Business Owner

Cherie Carvalho
Vice Principal

Denni Keyes
Small Business Owner

Vicky Kometani
Public Relations Consultant

Wendy Nickl
Kohala Teacher

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Amy Meyer-Sullivan
Jessica Patao
Nani Svendsen
Kim Takata

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Leelen Park

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Michelle Kawai

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Annalene Williams

KOHALA RESILIENCE HUB COORDINATOR

Kathy Matsuda

KOHALA RESILIENCE HUB ASSISTANT

Kimi Vakauta

February 10, 2025

RE: TESTIMONY BEFORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM AND AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEES

SB 522

RELATING TO THE HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL

Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 1:01 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 299

Submitted by Leelen Park

Dear Chair DeCoite, Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee,

My name is Leelen Park, and I am writing on behalf of the North Kohala Community Resource Center (NKCRC) in strong support of SB522, which allocates funding for purchasing the Halaula Agricultural Parcel. This critical investment will help ensure the land remains dedicated to farming and food production, strengthening North Kohala's agricultural economy and local food security.

For over 22 years, NKCRC has been committed to supporting grassroots projects that enhance the well-being of our community. Our mission is to provide local projects with the tools, resources, and mentorship they need to succeed. Many initiatives we support focus on sustainability, agriculture, and economic resilience. These are values that align closely with the intent of SB522.

As someone who has worked in nonprofit leadership for over 14 years, I have seen firsthand how access to agricultural land empowers local farmers, fosters food sovereignty, and provides economic opportunities for families in North Kohala. With increasing challenges posed by food imports, rising costs, and the loss of agricultural land to development, securing the Halaula Agricultural Parcel is not just a land-use decision; it is a commitment to the future of Hawai'i's food systems.

By passing SB522, the Legislature has an opportunity to ensure that this land remains in agricultural production for generations to come. I respectfully urge the committee to support this measure and invest in the long-term sustainability of Hawai'i's rural communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Leelen Park

55-3393 Akoni Pule Hwy ~ P. O. Box 519, Hawi, Hawaii 96719
Phone: 808-889-5523 ~ Fax: 808-889-5527 ~ www.northkohala.org ~ Email: info@northkohala.org

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 10:34:10 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Katherine Pomeroy | Testifying for Kohala Medical Herb Farm | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha,

Please support SB522. This project is the smartest action our community can pursue right now. It's been a dream for Kohala for decades.

Katherine Pomeroy

**Boteilho Hawaii Enterprises Inc.
PO Box 190
Hawi, HI 96719-0190**

February 11, 2025

SB522

RELATING TO HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL

Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism,

Boteilho Hawaii Enterprises **supports SB522** which authorizes funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development.

Since 1985, the Boteilho family has operated our dairy farm in North Kohala and is now the last remaining licensed dairy farm in Hawaii. Increasing agribusiness development and providing local food to the communities is important to us and this bill helps support those goals as the Halaula Agricultural Parcel is ideal for agricultural development due to its flat and fertile soil.

We humbly request your support of SB522.

Sincerely,

Ed Boteilho Jr.
President
Boteilho Hawaii Enterprises, Inc.

Bahman Sadeghi
Vice-President
Boteilho Hawaii Enterprises, Inc.



February 7, 2025

Subject: Testimony on SB522 – Relating to the Halaula Agricultural Parcel

Aloha, Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Senate Committees on Economic Development and Tourism, and Agriculture and Environment

Hawai'i Food+ Policy **submits cautious support for SB522**, which authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) to purchase the Halaula Agricultural Parcel in North Kohala for agricultural development. While the goal of expanding agricultural lands is commendable, we remain deeply concerned about ADC's track record in effectively managing lands and ensuring that they benefit local and Native Hawaiian farmers.

Land access in Hawai'i is already a significant issue, with many small-scale and Native Hawaiian farmers struggling to secure affordable agricultural land. The acquisition of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel presents a promising opportunity to bolster local food production, increase food security, and provide economic benefits to rural communities. However, ADC's history of poor transparency and lack of strategic planning, as noted in the [Hawai'i State Auditor's 2021 report](#), raises concerns about whether this land will be effectively managed to serve Hawai'i's people and not just large agribusiness interests (Hawai'i State Auditor, 2021).

For this acquisition to truly support food self-sufficiency and local farmers, it is imperative that ADC is required to create and publicly release a clear and enforceable land use plan. This plan should prioritize local farmers and Native Hawaiian agricultural practitioners and establish a transparent leasing process that prevents the land from being used for non-food agriculture, such as biofuel production. We also strongly recommend the establishment of an oversight committee to monitor ADC's management of the land and ensure public accountability. Without these safeguards, there is a significant risk that this land acquisition will fail to meet its intended purpose.

Given the scarcity of agricultural land in Hawai'i, it is crucial that this investment is approached with caution and strategic planning. This is to avoid the mismanagement and inefficiencies that have historically plagued ADC. We strongly encourage the committee to include amendments

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

that will prioritize sustainable food production, ensure equitable land access, and require ADC to be fully transparent in its management of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel. We appreciate the time and consideration you are giving to this important matter.

Mahalo,
The Hawai'i Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

References

Hawai'i State Auditor. (2021). Audit of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (Report No. 21-01). Honolulu, HI. Retrieved from <https://files.hawaii.gov/auditor/Reports/2021/21-01.pdf>

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.

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 12:19:51 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Caroline Azelski | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Strong support. Thank you.

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 10:32:59 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Donna Maltz | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

To the Honorable Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and esteemed members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism:

I am Donna Maltz, a proud resident of Kohala, where my husband Kevin and I cultivate a 3-acre farmstead, growing small-scale citrus while stewarding the land. As a board member of the North Kohala Farmers Union and a long-time advocate for sustainable agriculture, I am compelled to express my strong support for Senate Bill 522.

This bill has the potential to revitalize Kohala's agricultural industry by authorizing funds for the Agribusiness Development Corporation to purchase the Halaula Agricultural Parcel. Our community has long recognized the importance of local food production, and this parcel offers a unique opportunity for agricultural development due to its fertile soil, relatively flat terrain, and access to a plantation-era well.

The benefits of this bill extend far beyond the parcel itself. By supporting local farmers and increasing food production, we can enhance our community's resilience, promote economic growth, and preserve the rich agricultural heritage of North Kohala. Moreover, this investment aligns with the North Kohala Community Development Plan, which prioritizes local food production and sustainable agriculture.

I urge you to recognize the significance of this bill and its potential to shape a brighter future for Kohala's farmers, families, and community. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,
Donna and Kevin Maltz

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 9:54:02 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Shannon Atkinson | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

My name is Shannon Atkinson, and I am writing in strong support of SB522, which allocates funding for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel to ensure its availability for farming and food production in North Kohala.

As a resident of Hawai‘i who values food security, local agriculture, and economic sustainability, I believe that acquiring and preserving agricultural lands for active food production is crucial for our community. With the increasing challenges of food imports, rising costs, and land availability, it is imperative that we invest in local farmers and prioritize agriculture as a pillar of economic resilience and sustainability.

Supporting this bill means supporting small farmers, food sovereignty, and job creation while safeguarding land that might otherwise be lost to non-agricultural development. The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) must have the resources to ensure that these lands are used for their intended purpose—growing food for local consumption.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass SB522 and help strengthen Hawai‘i’s agricultural future.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shannon Atkinson

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 10:45:00 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Beth Robinson | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Testimony of Beth Robinson (Individual)

February 9, 2025

RE: SUPPORT FOR SB522 RELATING TO THE HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism,

My name is Beth Robinson. I am a 20-year resident of North Kohala. I reside on a nine-acre agricultural property with six acres of macadamia nut orchards. In my professional life I am statewide Director of Conservation and Legacy Lands for the real estate brokerage Hawai'i Life - which means a large part of my practice involves selling active agricultural properties, from small family farms to large ranch acreage. I also serve on the Board of Hawai'i Land Trust, which holds agricultural conservation easements in North Kohala and throughout Hawai'i, protecting lands for agricultural production in perpetuity.

I am in strong support of Senate Bill 522 that authorizes funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development.

Our 2008 County Community Development Plan for the district of North Kohala contains a goal of 50% of the food consumed in Kohala to be grown in Kohala, continuing the district's tradition as a self-sufficient agricultural community. This bill promotes Kohala's future by providing increased agribusiness development and employment opportunities as well as local food for local families. Mahalo for taking the time to consider this bill and my testimony.

Mahalo,

Beth Robinson

Hawi, Hawaii

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 2:14:07 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rascha Marie Haulikelani Jelks | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments: Testimony of Rascha Marie Haulikelani Jelks Rascha Jelks Design LLC February 9th, 2025 RE: SUPPORT FOR SB522 RELATING TO THE HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism, My name is Rascha Marie Haulikelani Jelks and I am a current resident of North Kohala, born and raised near Kawaihae. I live at my father’s ranch, where he raised and harvested tilapia and catfish until the ditch broke down most recently. Now, my husband and I are stewards of this land, and my uncle, Leonard Pang, and his daughter have grazed their cattle here for over 20 years. I am in strong support of Senate Bill 522 that authorizes funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development. In my volunteer service as Secretary with the North Kohala Affordable Housing Group, I follow and try to contribute to the progress of the Agriculture Action Working Group in order to coordinate our efforts to provide workforce housing. The purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel by ADC would give Kohala’s experienced and prospective farmers more opportunities to learn and to produce more healthy and delicious local food. This would not only contribute to the resiliency of our district, but also to maintaining our unique and beloved social fabric. This purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel would help our community achieve our priority goal of agricultural development as stated throughout the North Kohala Community Development Plan. The geological characteristics of this site, as well as its location make it prime for agricultural and human development within our town. This bill promotes Kohala’s future by providing increased agribusiness development and employment opportunities as well as local food for local families. Mahalo for taking the time to consider this bill and my testimony. Sincerely, Rascha Marie Haulikelani Jelks

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 6:55:49 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Billy Wong | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Bill Wong, and I am a fourth-generation resident of North Kohala. I have dedicated my life to farming, ranching, and business in this community. I am writing in support of **SB522** as I serve on various agricultural and water committees for the North Kohala community and deeply understand the importance of responsible land use.

For 25 years, through my businesses, I was the lessee of the Halaula parcels currently under discussion. My business headquarters, ATV Outfitters and Kohala Ditch Adventures, operated on part of this property, while the remaining land was utilized for farming and ranching operations.

In 2010, we cultivated 100 coconut trees on the western portion of the property, which thrived due to the rich soil and ideal agricultural climate. On the eastern parcels, we managed cattle ranching and saw firsthand the land's potential for doubling production due to its deep soil and favorable conditions.

Given my experience with the land, I strongly support the proposal to dedicate these parcels solely to agricultural cultivation for various farmers. The elevation, rainfall, and soil conditions make this land an invaluable resource for sustainable agriculture in our community.

With that said, I submit this testimony in full support of **SB522** and the preservation of these parcels for farming and cultivation.

Mahalo,
Bill Wong

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 7:19:42 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Tanica Gaspar | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism,

My name is Tanica Gaspar and I am a resident of Kohala in the Halaula area. I am in strong support of Senate Bill 522 that authorizes funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development.

Kohala has a long history of successful agriculture, but many prospective farmers cannot afford suitable land at the the present costs in North Kohala. The lack of availability of stable farm leases and licenses has prevented the community from realizing its food production potential. Now, many of our best agricultural lands are in danger of being lost to outside investors.

The purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel by ADC has the potential to open opportunities for Kohala’s farmers and increase local food production, a longtime priority of our community that is clearly stated as such throughout the North Kohala Community Development Plan. The Halaula Agricultural Parcel is advantageous for agricultural development because it is relatively flat with fertile soil. It has a plantation era well that could be reactivated, and a highly skilled agricultural workforce that lives within 10 minutes of the parcel.

This bill promotes Kohala’s future by providing increased agribusiness development and employment opportunities as well as local food for local families. Mahalo for taking the time to consider this bill and my testimony.

Mahalo,

Tanica Gaspar

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 9:12:01 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Marlee Breese | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Testimony of Marlee Breese

Citizen

February 10, 2025

RE: SUPPORT FOR SB522 RELATING TO THE HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism,

I am Marlee Breese, a resident of Kohala. I am in strong support of Senate Bill 522 that authorizes funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development.

Although Kohala has a long history of successful agriculture, many prospective farmers cannot afford suitable land in North Kohala which has prevented the community from realizing its food production potential. Many of our best agricultural lands are in danger of being lost to outside investors.

The purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel by ADC will open opportunities for Kohala's farmers and increase local food production. This longtime priority of our community is clearly stated throughout the North Kohala Community Development Plan. The Halaula Agricultural Parcel is relatively flat with fertile soil and has a plantation era well that could be reactivated. This, combined with a highly skilled agricultural workforce that lives in proximity to the parcel makes it particularly advantageous for agricultural development

This bill promotes Kohala's future by providing increased agribusiness development and employment opportunities as well as local food for local families. Mahalo for taking the time to consider this bill and my testimony.

Mahalo,

Marlee Breese

Citizen and Kohala Resident

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 10:04:59 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Joe Carvalho | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I fully support SB522 regarding the purchase of the industrial lot in Halaula. The purchase will be possible for our Farmers and Ranchers to have a place for processing their products. This will be a plus for feeding our local population and even lessen the dependency of having food shipped in from the mainland.

Aloha,

Joe Carvalho

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 10:07:46 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Kathleen Matsuda | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

My name is Kathleen Matsuda, and I am writing in strong support of SB522, which allocates funding for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel to ensure its availability for farming and food production in North Kohala.

As a resident of Hawai‘i who values food security, local agriculture, and economic sustainability, I believe that acquiring and preserving agricultural lands for active food production is crucial for our community. With the increasing challenges of food imports, rising costs, and land availability, it is imperative that we invest in local farmers and prioritize agriculture as a pillar of economic resilience and sustainability.

Supporting this bill means supporting small farmers, food sovereignty, and job creation while safeguarding land that might otherwise be lost to non-agricultural development. The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) must have the resources to ensure that these lands are used for their intended purpose—growing food for local consumption.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass SB522 and help strengthen Hawai‘i’s agricultural future.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

**Sincerely,
Kathleen Matsuda
Director of Kohala Resilience Hub & Outreach**

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:17:27 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| David Fuertes | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

My name is David Fuertes Executive Director for 501c3 Kahua Pa’a Mua (KPM) and I am a resident of North Kohala. Our non-profit started in 2010 and our mission is “To enhance communities through economic, conservation, preservation, social and educational programs for youth and adults”. This Bill which allocates funding for the purchase of Halaula Agricultural Parcel to ensure its availability for farming and food production in North Kohala would be the pinnacle of accomplishing our mission.

Mentorship in Agriculture as well as providing land and facilities for start-up career pathways in Agriculture production is our mission. A major obstacle has been the availability of “land” for new farmers to expand and implement their new knowledge of farming through organic, Korean Natural Farming Methods in crops and animals. Preparing them as food producers and creating young farmers for our community is our goal.

Community input in Agriculture planning is another initiative our non-profit has taken the lead in. Since the closure of the Kohala Ditch water system, 2 ½ year ago, KPM has partners with other organizations to have the community participate in :

- Kohala Visioning for Agriculture - March 2023 (280 participants)
- Kohala Visioning for Agriculture II (to affirm our vision) – August 2023 (180 participants)

As a result, 7 areas of concern were identified and working committees were created:

Land, Water, Food Production, Access, Energy, Health & Wellness and Farmers Housing.

These community committees meet regularly on a monthly basis to discuss initiatives.

- Kohala Water Summit - August 2024 (200 Participants)

25 speakers shared “Facts on Water in Kohala.”

The North Kohala Community planning process has been interesting with challenges and much collaboration as participants focus on values and goals.

This SB522 will help us move forward in steps of attaining agriculture lands for new farmers to create food and become entrepreneurs. We realize that this is the beginning of many challenges, such as water, land development and infrastructure, marketing, etc. Kohala is ready for these challenges.

It will give Kahua Pa'a Mua and many organizations that are preparing our people to enter careers in agriculture a sense of establishing the pathway for our initiatives success. Furthermore, being a part of our State of Hawaii's Food Resilience initiative.

We humbly ask your support of SB522, thank you for your consideration.

David Fuertes

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 7:34:47 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Erika Kuhr | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism,

I am Erika Kuhr, a resident of Kohala and our family has been farming here since 2008, on several different lease lands. I am in strong support of Senate Bill 522 that authorizes funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development.

Kohala has a long history of successful agriculture, but many prospective farmers cannot afford suitable land at the the present costs in North Kohala. The lack of availability of stable farm leases and licenses has prevented the community from realizing its food production potential. Now, many of our best agricultural lands are in danger of being lost to outside investors.

The purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel by ADC has the potential to open opportunities for Kohala’s farmers and increase local food production, a longtime priority of our community that is clearly stated as such throughout the North Kohala Community Development Plan. The Halaula Agricultural Parcel is advantageous for agricultural development because it is relatively flat with fertile soil. It has a plantation era well that could be reactivated, and a highly skilled agricultural workforce that lives within 10 minutes of the parcel.

This bill promotes Kohala’s future by providing increased agribusiness development and employment opportunities as well as local food for local families. Mahalo for taking the time to consider this bill and my testimony.

Mahalo,

Erika Kuhr

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 9:10:56 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Gabriela Schneider | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

RE: SUPPORT FOR SB522 RELATING TO THE HALAULA AGRICULTURAL PARCEL

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism,

I am Gabriela, a resident of Kohala and former manager of the Kohala Food Hub. I am in strong support of Senate Bill 522 that authorizes funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development.

Kohala has a long history of successful agriculture, but many prospective farmers cannot afford suitable land at the the present costs in North Kohala. This I witnessed from when I purchased produce from local farmers to distribute to local kupuna during the COVID pandemic, and when I tried to aggregate produce to sell to local hotels and food establishments. The lack of availability of stable farm leases and licenses has prevented the community from realizing its food production potential. Now, many of our best agricultural lands are in danger of being lost to outside investors.

The purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel by ADC has the potential to open opportunities for Kohala’s farmers and increase local food production, a longtime priority of our community that is clearly stated as such throughout the North Kohala Community Development Plan. The Halaula Agricultural Parcel is advantageous for agricultural development because it is relatively flat with fertile soil. It has a plantation era well that could be reactivated, and a highly skilled agricultural workforce that lives within 10 minutes of the parcel.

This bill promotes Kohala’s future by providing increased agribusiness development and employment opportunities as well as local food for local families. Mahalo for taking the time to consider this bill and my testimony.

Mahalo,

Gabriela Schneider

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 9:36:53 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| annalene williams | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB522 - Relating to the Halaula Agricultural Parcel

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Economic Development and Tourism,

My name is Annalene Williams. I am a member of the Agriculture Subgroup of the North Kohala CDP, but I am submitting this testimony in support of SB522 as an individual, which proposes to enable the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) to acquire a roughly 50-acre plot of land in Halaula, North Kohala, for agricultural development. The property features a decommissioned plantation-era well that can be reactivated to supply water for crops.

In 2008, the North Kohala Community Development Plan established a community goal of producing 50% of the food consumed locally. Nearly two decades later, this objective remains unmet. This highlights the need for investment in our community’s agricultural infrastructure and capacity building. The ADC has a demonstrated record of success in fostering agricultural development in other regions of the state, and I believe their involvement in this project will be a positive step towards achieving our local food security goals.

Hawaii imports 80-90% of its food, making agricultural self-sufficiency critical. North Kohala, a rural and isolated community, needs a diversified economy beyond tourism. Re-establishing our historical agricultural roots, as evidenced by archaeological records, will enhance food security, create jobs, and build a more resilient community. It will also improve access to nutritious local produce.

Post-COVID-19, our Agriculture Group has been actively engaged with the community to address these critical issues. In 2023, we hosted two AgVision events, providing a platform for residents to share their input and ideas regarding the future of agriculture in North Kohala. The feedback gathered from these events was organized into seven key categories: water, land, production, food access, energy, farmer health and wellness, and farmer housing. We have since been holding monthly meetings to delve into the complexities of each of these areas. We recognize the interconnectedness of these challenges, understanding that progress in one area often depends on advancements in others. In 2024, our water group organized and hosted a Water Summit to educate the community about the complexities of water availability and the various departments involved in ensuring access to water in our region. This demonstrates our

commitment to a collaborative approach to agricultural development guided by community input.

Acquiring the proposed land in Halaula represents a strategic step towards realizing the goals outlined in the North Kohala Community Development Plan and aligns with the priorities identified by our community. I urge the committee to favorably consider SB522 and support this important initiative for agricultural development in North Kohala.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Annalene Williams

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 10:39:19 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Cole Fuertes | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in strong support of SB 522, which authorizes the ADC to acquire the Hala'ula Agricultural Parcel from its current owner. This acquisition is a vital step toward ensuring that ag land in North Kohala remains available for local farmers to **cultivate crops and raise livestock**, strengthening Hawai'i's food security and agricultural economy.

I have farming experience through working with Kahua Pa'a Mua, where I have gained the necessary skills to grow food and contribute to our local agricultural system. However, like many aspiring farmers in our community, I **lack access to land** to start and expand my own farming operations. The **rising cost and limited availability** of farmland make it difficult for local growers to establish sustainable agricultural business.

Ensuring this parcel remains dedicated to agriculture would give small-scale framers a chance to secure land, grow food, and contribute to the local economy. With 2-3 acre plots, farmers could cultivate crops and raise livestock, strengthening Hawai'i's food security and reducing reliance on imports.

The people of Kohala have a long and rich history of farming. Generations of families have cultivated the land, feeding their communities while maintaining a deep connection to 'āina. SB 522 represents a crucial **opportunity to reclaim local farming spaces and restore out ability to grow food for our communities**.

I urge you to **support SB522** to keep this land in agricultural production and provide much-needed opportunities for local farmers.

Mahalo nui for your time and consideration.

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 11:39:32 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rachel Lankford | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I am a resident of North Kohala. In March 2023, I attended the Kohala Agricultural Visioning Event in Kapa'au. It was impressive seeing the enthusiasm the community brought to the endeavor. We brainstormed about improving ag in the District and the energy was electric.

I joined in several idea-generating groups and noticed there is no clear "land back" initiative here. However, having the state support farmers by acquiring land presents the best opportunity we can hope for. North Kohala farmers are eager to produce more food. Let's give them a chance!

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:13:43 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Matt | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I support this bill it will help the state be more sustainable, which it could minimize a carbon footprint from the big ships shipping in all agricultural food products.

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:45:16 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Aoloa Patao | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Economic Development and Tourism,

I am Aoloa Patao, a resident of Kohala and am a teacher at Kohala High school who incorporates farming in my curriculum. I am in strong support of Senate Bill 522 that authorizes funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation for the purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel for agricultural development.

Kohala has a long history of successful agriculture, but many prospective farmers cannot afford suitable land at the the present costs in North Kohala. The lack of availability of stable farm leases and licenses has prevented the community from realizing its food production potential. Now, many of our best agricultural lands are in danger of being lost to outside investors.

The purchase of the Halaula Agricultural Parcel by ADC has the potential to open opportunities for Kohala’s farmers and increase local food production, a longtime priority of our community that is clearly stated as such throughout the North Kohala Community Development Plan. The Halaula Agricultural Parcel is advantageous for agricultural development because it is relatively flat with fertile soil. It has a plantation era well that could be reactivated, and a highly skilled agricultural workforce that lives within 10 minutes of the parcel.

This bill promotes Kohala’s future by providing increased agribusiness development and employment opportunities as well as local food for local families. Mahalo for taking the time to consider this bill and my testimony.

Mahalo,

Aoloa Patao

SB-522

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:45:45 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:01:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Sadie Garcia | Individual | Oppose | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha All,

As a resident of North Kohala and an adjacent neighbor to the proposed parcel, I am a strong supporter of agriculture and the vision of agricultural development for our community. I am excited to see this vision come to life. My grandparents, who were plantation workers, and my family, as homestead gardeners, have long been contributing by providing produce to our local markets, which underscores our ongoing commitment to the success of this initiative.

I would like to speak in regard to Bill SB522.

There are two important requests I wish to present, both of which are crucial to the residents of this area and must be addressed with the utmost consideration. I have had several discussions with the current landowner on this matter and am grateful that he understands my point. I would like to emphasize the critical importance of keeping the back roads open for continued use by our area residents. Specifically, I request that the fencing remain in its current location, with the remaining land designated for agricultural purposes.

For over 60 years, my family has maintained this road, and this long-standing commitment should be taken into account in any planning decisions. If accommodations can and will be made for the Hawai'i Wildlife Center, I trust that similar consideration will be given to ensuring continued access for residents of this area.

Secondly, I have concerns regarding the agricultural practices to be used on the proposed parcel. I request that no harmful chemicals or GMO crops be planted near the residents and Kohala Middle School, as health and wellness should be a top priority when making decisions and planning for the future of this area.

I briefly reviewed your governance documents for the Agribusiness Development Corporation, and several concerns stood out. Based on these concerns, I must oppose this bill at this time.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters. I look forward to further understanding and supporting efforts.

Mahalo,
Sadie Garcia

