

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

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2025
3:30 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308

SENATE BILL NO. 865, SENATE DRAFT 1, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 865, SD1, HD1 that appropriates funds to establish a permanent Extension Agent position within the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience's (CTAHR) Kona Cooperative Extension.

The Department of Agriculture (Department) supports the measure. The CTAHR's Kona Extension Office has assisted and contributed to the success of the Kona coffee industry in addition to their support of other crops grown in the area.

The Department respectfully recommends that this measure be amended to reinstate the proposed permanent Educational Support Associate position. The establishment of both the permanent Extension Agent position and the establishment of the originally requested permanent Educational Support Associate position in the Kona Cooperative Extension Office would greatly benefit the agricultural community in Kona.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Friday, March 28, 2025 at 3:30 p.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 865 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB 865 SD1 HD1 relating to Agriculture that appropriates funds to establish a permanent Extension agent position within the University of Hawai'i (UH) College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience's (CTAHR) Kona Cooperative Extension.

Coffee has emerged as an important cash crop for growers in Hawai'i. It has also become an important export commodity boosting Hawai'i's economy. CTAHR conducts research and provides research-based information to increase coffee production in the state and improve the economic viability of growers. Although coffee research plots exist at multiple CTAHR stations, CTAHR's Agricultural Research and Extension Station (CARES) in Kona currently has the sole Extension Agent engaged in applied research and outreach on coffee. Sustainability of coffee production is threatened by the Coffee Leaf Rust and Coffee Berry Borer and additional research and Extension capacity is needed to support the coffee industry throughout the state.

We strongly support this bill and it would be advantageous to have another Extension agent position that focuses on coffee and other orchard crops with export potential such as macadamia nuts, cacao and tea to meet the needs of coffee and other orchard crops growers in the region and statewide.

We strongly support SB 865 SD1 HD1, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 9:36:28 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daeus Bencomo	Mahilani's Partners LLC dba Hilo Coffee Co.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a coffee and cacao grower, CTAHR and its extension agents have been a fantastic support to our operation and overall health of our crops. With coffee being Hawai'i's #3 agricultural commodity it's pertinent that this bill gets passed. With more resources comes greater success for our industry.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 10:02:26 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Love	hawaii tropical fruit growers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I can not over state the importance of support for this bill, There were 8 extension agents doing this work in the 1960s when the crop value was much less. It is not to much to ask for a 2nd agent to support the hard working farmers in Kona and statewide who grow coffee, mac nuts and over 300 types of tropical fruit. Our members need help from UH and only they can provide it. Simply you must support this bill and UH in order to help our farmers achieve sustainability. If you support agriculture in Hawaii then you should be supporting this bill.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 2:10:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Miles Mayne	Kau Coffee Growers Cooperative	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB865 SD1 HD1

The Ka‘u Coffee Growers Cooperative strongly supports the funding of SB865 SD1 HD1 to establish a full-time extension agent’s position at the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), dedicated to the coffee and orchard crops industries in Hawaii. This position is essential to the continued growth and sustainability of our industry.

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Hawaii is home to 1,111 coffee farms, spanning a total of 9,422 acres. Coffee has consistently ranked as one of the top five agricultural commodities in the state and is currently the third largest agricultural product. Despite its significant contributions to Hawaii's economy and agricultural landscape, the coffee industry remains disproportionately under-resourced when compared to other agricultural sectors.

Currently, there is only one extension agent assigned to serve the coffee industry, whereas floriculture and ornamentals are supported by five agents, and livestock by three. This disparity underscores the urgent need for additional resources and dedicated support to ensure the coffee industry's sustainability and growth.

Extension services are critical to agriculture, offering farmers the tools, knowledge, and resources necessary to improve practices, boost productivity, and address challenges. A full-time extension agent dedicated to the coffee industry would provide vital support to farmers by:

- Offering guidance on best practices.
- Assisting with pest and disease management.
- Addressing market challenges to enhance farm sustainability.

This support is particularly crucial for Hawaii's family-owned coffee farms, which embody the heart and soul of our industry.

By investing in this position, Hawaii's coffee sector can achieve:

- Increased productivity and sustainability.
- A steady supply of premium, high-quality coffee
- Continued economic contributions to the state's overall agricultural success.

For these reasons, we urge the House Finance Committee to support SB865 SD1 HD1 and ensure that funding for this critical extension associate position is included this year. The Ka'u Coffee Growers Cooperative firmly believes that this investment will not only benefit individual farmers but also strengthen the entire coffee industry and its role in Hawaii's economy.

Thank you for your attention to this vital matter and for supporting Hawaii's coffee farmers. We look forward to your favorable decision

Gloria Camba, President & Miles Mayne, Director

Kau Coffee Growers Cooperative.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 4:19:47 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thomas Greenwell	Greenwell Farms Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I humbly request your full support for Bill SB865.

Greenwell Farms grows close to 200 acres of coffee as well as Cacao, Macnuts and various other fruit trees. We have depended on Extension Agents from the University of Hawaii UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension to help us solve problems associated with farming in Hawaii.

Please vote YES

Tom Greenwell

Greenwell Farms Inc.



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

March 28, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON SB 865, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
3:30 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 SB 865, SD1, HD1, which appropriates funds to establish a permanent Extension Agent position within the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience's Kona Cooperative Extension.

The excellent work performed by UH CTAHR for Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers cannot be overstated. The ongoing outreach and education are unparalleled in the State. Farmers and ranchers rely on this program for their success. CTAHR has helped develop and improve agricultural technologies pertinent to Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers. This includes intensive cover crop research, promoting the importance of locally grown produce, developing biological and cultural methods for controlling pests without chemicals, and the use of biological nitrogen fixation to significantly increase the production of high protein foods while at the same time reducing the need for commercially produced fertilizers.

An new permanent Extension Agent will provide support to CTAHR's Kona Extension Faculty who provide support for farmers and ranchers that produce coffee, macadamia nut, avocado, and other tropical fruits, and livestock, as well as assisting with coffee leaf rust and coffee berry borer, two-lined spittlebug, tree pruning, grafting, propagation, organic and conventional pesticides, and nematode management.

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

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 7:52:59 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joan Obra	Rusty's Hawaiian	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

As a partner in Rusty's Hawaiian, an award-winning coffee farm, mill and roastery in the Ka'u District on Hawai'i Island, I am writing to strongly support SB 865 SD1 HD1. The proposed extension agent position at CTAHR would provide vital assistance to Hawaii's coffee growers, expanding the level of service that we need to remain competitive and sustainable.

Our industry faces challenges from two devastating threats: Coffee Berry Borer (CBB), one of the world's most destructive coffee pests, and Coffee Leaf Rust (CLR), one of the most severe diseases affecting coffee plants globally. However, we currently rely on just one extension agent who must also cover macadamia nuts and other orchard crops. This situation is severely inadequate for supporting Hawai'i's coffee farmers.

My family can tell you firsthand about the importance of CTAHR's extension program. Over the years, its agents have been instrumental in advising us and other producers on essential aspects of coffee cultivation, including planting, pruning, nutrition, and disease management. The success of my family's farming operation owes a great deal to the advice we receive from CTAHR. With the sobering realities of CBB and CLR, we need help from CTAHR more than ever.

Given the cutbacks in grant support at the federal level, it's critical that the State fund this permanent extension agent position. I urge you to advance SB 865 SD1 HD1 and help farmers increase access to the technical guidance we need to thrive.

Sincerely,
Joan Obra
Partner
Rusty's Hawaiian
Ka'u District, Hawai'i Island

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 5:00:37 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Kimo Falconer	Hawaii Coffee Growers Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am testifying on behalf of the coffee growing industry in asking your committee to support SB 865 SB1 HD1. Our industry depends on the work done by the Kona Extension Service. Since the arrival of Coffee Berry Borer and Coffee Leaf Rust, it is this office handling all the outreach work to help fight these pests, and at the same time they are doing the same for other tropical ag issues. A staff of one simply cannot carry the load. I humbly ask for your consideration by passing this measure.

Mahalo for your time and for the opportunity to testify.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 8:22:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Moore	Kealia Ranch	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please approve SB865 SD1 HD1 which appropriates funding for one permanent, full-time EXTENSION AGENT position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension to support the coffee and orchard crops extension and applied research program at the Kona Research Station in the County of Hawaii.

Kealia Ranch is primarily a cattle operation, but we supplement our income with both a coffee and cacao orchard. With the continuing challenges of farming orchard crops, we depend on the Kona Extension Service to assist us with these challenges. We are grateful for all the research and outreach that they provide, especially as new pests are discovered. The research and information provided to meet these challenges is imperative to the viability of our industries.

I thank you for your support.

I

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 12:44:43 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bill Dwyer	Hawaii Coffee Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawaii Coffee Association represents all sectors of the Hawaii Coffee Industry, including growers, millers, wholesalers, roasters and retailers. The HCA's primary objectives are to educate, raise awareness, and increase the consumption of Hawaiian coffees worldwide. We strongly support this bill, as it directly correlates to our organization's mission.

Aloha Esteemed Senators and Representatives,

I am writing on behalf of Kauai Coffee Company LLC. in full support of **SB865_HD1**. My name is Bronson B. Yadao. I am the Orchard Manager of a 3000-acre coffee plantation on the Westside of Kauai. As many of you know, Hawaii's coffee industry has been decimated by CBB (Coffee Berry Borer) and more recently CLR (Coffee Leaf Rust). Kaua'i was the last major growing region in the State (and world) to be infected by CBB and CLR. The discovery of both took place on our farm in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

Geographic isolation is a blessing in the sense that Hawaii's coffee industry was able to stave off both pests- decades, centuries after most of the prominent growing regions of the world. Now that the entire State has both major pests- geographic isolation is also a curse in the sense that industry experts predominantly reside thousands of miles away in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

As it stands, UH CTAHR has a single extension agent with extensive coffee expertise residing in the Kona region of Hawaii island. Although she is very knowledgeable, capable and responsive- she is only a single professional- dealing with an ever-growing threat to the industry across the State.

I strongly support appropriating additional funding for much needed support for additional extension agent support to serve the State of Hawaii. The coffee industry in Hawaii has sustained many challenges within the past decade and several farms have already succumbed to the pest pressure- making their operations economically unviable. If Hawaii wants to continue to be a place of rich, thriving agricultural diversity- this position needs to be approved in 2025.

Sincerely,
Bronson B. Yadao
Orchard Manager
Kauai Coffee Company LLC.
PO Box 530
Kalaheo, HI. 96741
(808)639-0839
byadao@kauaicoffee.com

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 2:31:26 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reggie Hasegawa	NUTRIEN AG SOLUTIONS	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I AM IN SUPPORT OF THE EXTENSION AGENT POSITION FOR THE HAWAII COFFEE INDUSTRY. THE HAWAII COFFEE INDUSTRY REALLY NEEDS SUPPORT FROM THE STATE TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE DIRECT EDUCATIONAL EFFORT!!! I TOO ARE IN SIMILIAR FOCUS AND TRY TO PROVIDE DIRECT SUPPORT AND ESTABLISH A PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP WITH GROWERS WHICH IS THE SAME AS AN EXTENSION AGENT. THE EXTENSION AGENT IS BETTER SINCE THERE IS NOT ANY PERCIEVED BIAS VS PRIVATE INDUSTRY. WE ARE NOW IN A CRITICAL PERIOD THAT WITHOUT MORE SUPPORT THE HAWAII COFFEE INDUSTRY WILL BE IN GRAVE DANGER OF FALLING BELOW BEING THE 2ND OR 3RD LARGEST AGRICULTURE COMMODITY OF GROSS VALUE. I REALLY HOPE THAT THE STATE SUPPORTS THIS POSITION TO HELP AG GET STRONGER SO WE ARE ABLE TO SURVIVE THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A FARMER!! MUCH MAHALO!!!

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 2:33:15 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryson Nakamasu	Honolulu Coffee Farms	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi,

My name is Ryson Nakamasu and I am speaking on behalf of Honolulu Coffee as their Farm Operation Manager.

We are in favor of CTAHR having an additional Kona Extension Agent.

Coffee is the number 3 commodity for Hawaii Ag. Industry and we have lots of problems that came upon us within the last several years. Pests, and viruses have hit us hard, without the information from the Kona extension office, the coffee crop would almost certainly be gone. They give us helpful information twice a month, sometimes more, if or when certain mother nature occurrences happen that affect our ag industry, or information on what products to use that the state approves for pests and viruses, and how to apply it effectively, Also,,,,, How would they know what to educate us on? (the number 3 commodity in the State of Hawaii) it's because they work hard to find solutions, research, resources, to make sure us farmers don't panic and give up. It takes lots of expertise and experimentation, data, to find the best possible solution for any problems we've had. It can't be done by one person. It's a multi person job, project, months of field work, days even nights work.

I'm in the trade, I know what kind of work is involved for the Agents, and they have to do data work after. They are the ones who deserve every penny of our tax money, they work hard and put the time in. They are very important to us farmers. We need them. We needed them yesterday, need them tomorrow, we need them for the future, NOT in the future, we need them now. Their tutorials always fills up with the people from industry, that's how much the industry is involved with their work.

In Conclusion,

Farminig is not easy, you need more than one person. And the time is now, not in the future, our ag. problems are occurring now. Coffee beetle bore , coffee leaf rust. Please support our industry by adding another Kona Extension Agent position. Check out there Website or ask them for a link to their coffee tutorials. You'd be amazed on what they've been doing, they are worth every penny to our industry.

Mahalo for your time,

Ryson

Honolulu Coffee Farms



Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Anabella Bruch
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Chapter Presidents

Clarence Baber
Kohala, Hawaii

Tony Vera
East Hawaii

Puna, Hawaii

Andrea Drayer
Ka'u, Hawaii

Maureen Datta
Kona, Hawaii

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hana, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakala, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahalawai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Kilia Avelino-Purdy
Molokai

Negus Manna
Lana'i

India Clark
North Shore, Oahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, Oahu

Ted Radovich
Waimanalo, Oahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, Oahu

Natalie Urminska
Kauai

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

The Hawaii Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFU supports SB865.**

SB865 represents a strategic and necessary investment in Hawaii's agricultural future. By establishing a permanent Extension Agent position at the University of Hawaii's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR), specifically within the Kona Cooperative Extension, this measure will strengthen the applied research and outreach capacity of the Kona Research Station. The new position will be instrumental in delivering science-based support to coffee and orchard crop producers across Hawaii Island.

The Kona region is a cornerstone of Hawaii's specialty crop sector. Globally recognized for its high-quality coffee and diverse orchard production, this region is vital to the state's food economy, cultural identity, and export potential. Yet, local producers face mounting challenges, including climate variability, invasive pests, and market pressures. A regionally based Extension Agent is essential for providing timely, localized assistance to help farmers address these issues, adopt sustainable practices, and enhance productivity.

This measure aligns directly with the Hawaii Farmers Union policy priorities, which emphasize the importance of regenerative agriculture, applied research, and technical assistance. Extension services are a critical link between scientific innovation and practical implementation on farms. A permanent, community-based Extension Agent will greatly improve access to research-driven strategies in soil health, pest and disease control, organic production, and climate resilience.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawaii Farmers Union



Testimony in Support of Bill 865 SB

Aloha Kākou,

My name is Dave Donald, and I am the owner of Waimea Coffee Farm LLC, a specialty coffee producer in Lalamilo Farm Lots in Kamuela, Hawai'i Island.

In 2016, I discovered an unusual-looking coffee shrub on my property. After some research, I learned that it was over 20 years old but only 2 feet tall. It turned out to be an experimental hybrid of Jamaican Blue Mountain and Guatemalan Arabica coffees, created by a University of Hawai'i Hilo professor. Out of 12 original plants, it was the sole survivor.

After six months of care, I nurtured it to 6 feet tall, and for the first time, it flowered and fruited. Wanting to learn how to harvest and process coffee, I turned to YouTube for basic guidance. Then, I sought advice from local cafés and coffee roasters in Kailua-Kona, who introduced me to Pacific Coffee Research (PCR), a Specialty Coffee Association (SCA)-certified lab in South Kona. I brought my green beans to PCR, where they inspected, graded, roasted, cupped, and scored them. **The result? A designation of Specialty Coffee.**

From some of those seeds, I grew 336 seedlings and planted them on my neighbor's farm in Lalamilo. Not knowing much about commercial coffee farming, I reached out to CTAHR, where I met Andrea Kawabata. Over the years, I attended multiple courses at the CTAHR Extension Office & Experimental Coffee Farm, receiving invaluable advice and recommendations. Topics ranged from managing **Coffee Berry Borer (CBB), Black Twig Borer (BTB), green scale, black sooty mold, Coffee Leaf Rust (CLR), and root-knot nematodes** to **pruning, stumping, grafting, irrigation, soil amendments, and foliar micronutrient applications**. I also learned about **spray equipment calibration, protective gear, farm supply sources, coffee moisture meter calibration** and so much more.

Without CTAHR and experts like Andrea Kawabata, it would have taken me **years** to compile this essential knowledge on my own.

Thanks to the guidance and support I received, I won **First Place in the Hawai'i District** at the **2021 Hawai'i State Coffee Cupping Competition**.

In February 2023, I was one of three coffee farmers representing Hawai'i at **Gulfood 2023 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE)**. My co-participants were a Kona coffee farmer offering **100% Gesha coffee for \$452 per pound wholesale** and another selling **100% Kona Typica for \$35 per pound wholesale**. When buyers asked what my **100% Waimea-grown** coffee was selling for, I replied, "**\$100 per pound or \$220 per kilogram**." Their response? "**How many TONS can I get?**"



This experience highlights the growing global demand for **Hawai‘i-grown specialty coffee**—but farmers like me **depend** on expert guidance from CTAHR to meet this demand.

Andrea Kawabata’s work is **essential** to the success of Hawai‘i Island coffee farmers. Her responsibilities are extensive and time-consuming. As a former teacher, I understand the immense effort required to develop and deliver effective courses. Yet, Andrea also manages the Extension’s **greenhouses, experimental farms, countless on-site farm visits**, and provides **critical one-on-one support** to farmers across the island. She is one of the busiest state employees we have.

There are **1,200 coffee farms on Hawai‘i Island**. Andrea is being pulled in numerous directions, **trying to juggle all of her responsibilities while visiting as many coffee farms as possible**. **She needs help to sustain this essential work**.

To ensure that coffee farmers across **Hāmākua, Hilo, Ka‘ū, Kona, and Waimea** continue to receive the support they need, **Andrea Kawabata needs an assistant!**

I strongly urge you to pass **Bill SB 865** to provide the necessary resources for this **critical** work.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

David H. Donald
Owner/Producer
Waimea Coffee Farm LLC
Kamuela, HI 96743



IN SUPPORT OF SB865
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

UH; CTAHR; Position; Establishment; Kona Cooperative Extension; Appropriations (\$)

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

The Synergistic Hawai'i Agriculture Council (SHAC) stands in support of this Bill. Our consortium represents 1,500 agribusinesses, from growers to processors and shippers, stretching across the State. SHAC coordinates research and marketing grants on behalf of 100% Hawaiian origin products, including coffee, papaya, floriculture and macadamia nuts.

Our current single Orchard Extension staff is not adequate when considering the \$130 million valuation of the crops they cover. Coffee, macadamias and orchard crops could all sustain their own Extension agent, yet all crops are combined into one staff position. Additional staff are desperately needed so that growers can maintain access to vital information. An additional Extension Agent will greatly benefit growers and their crop's health.

Thank you for considering this bill. Your attention makes a difference in the lives of hundreds of farmers.

Mahalo nui loa for supporting this bill!

Suzanne Shriner
Administrator

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 9:39:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roger Kaiwi	Kona Coffee Council	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure, it would make a huge difference to the community!

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 9:33:08 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William C Wakefield	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Honorable Senators, March 26, 2025

Our ‘ohana has four small successful farms in Kona on the Big Island. We organically farm mango, citrus, and turmeric/olena. We also grow coffee and avocado on our Bishop leasehold farm. *My husband and I have been farming in Kona for about 40 years.* We use the UH College of Tropical Agriculture extensively! They have been an invaluable resource, and we know that we wouldn’t be as successful if it weren’t for their help and advise, especially helping us battle multiple invasive pests and the nutritional needs of our diverse crops. We derive 100% of our income from farming and now our son and his family are benefitting, also, along with our state’s hard working fellow farmers. With our state encouraging food sustainability, and with the growth and potential growth of agriculture in Hawaii right now, we feel that it is imperative to have as much agricultural support as possible and feel that having a permanent educational support associate to support our one extension agent will make a difference.

PLEASE support Bill SB865, appropriating funds to establish a permanent Extension Agent position within the University of Hawai’i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience Kona Cooperative Extension. This will help secure the future of farming here, and will not only impact Hawaii’s economy, the next generation of young farmers, but also the livelihood and lifestyle of our island’s communities.

Sincerely and with much aloha,

William and Helen “Brooks” Wakefield

Wakefield & Sons, Inc. DBA Wakefield Organics, Ho’omalulu Farm, Pea Nani Farm

PO Box 1454, Kealahou, Hawaii 96750

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 9:38:23 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jim Monk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello - As a small coffee farmer in the KonaCoffee District, I ask that you pass this bill. As an industry we need all the help we can. This bill will fund an extension agent for the coffee and macadamia nut industries. These are the #3 and #7 largest agricultural industries in the state and we need plenty of help. Please pass this bill. Jim Monk

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 10:39:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrea Kawabata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Representative Yamashita, Representative Takenouchi, and members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Andrea Kawabata and I am a UH-CTAHR Extension Agent working with coffee statewide and the tropical fruit and macadamia nut industries in West Hawaii. I am submitting testimony as a private individual.

I write to you in **STRONG SUPPORT for SB865_HD1** which appropriates funds to establish a full-time, permanent Extension Agent position within the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience's Kona Research Station.

HDOA currently ranks **coffee as the #3 most valuable agricultural commodity in Hawaii**. And yet, extension support for this important industry continues to shrink. Historically and prior to the arrival of the Coffee Berry Borer and Coffee Leaf Rust to Hawaii, the state's coffee industry was supported by two full-time Extension agents, one Extension specialist, one researcher, and six research station technicians - all permanent positions. Today, my position is the only Extension position dedicated to coffee and Kona Research Station's two research technicians divide their time between the Kona and Mealani Research Stations and other non-coffee projects. Any and all coffee and orchard crops Extension program staff are temporarily and 100% funded through grants.

The **macadamia nut industry is ranked as Hawaii's #7 most valuable ag commodity and the tropical fruit industry continues to grow**. While there *was* one Extension specialist and one Extension agent dedicated to macadamia and cacao island-wide, and tropical fruit in East Hawaii, this husband and wife team left in 2020 and these full-time, permanent positions have not since been filled. And so, these crops fell back to my program.

60% of the state's orchard crops farms (3,370+) are located in Hawaii County. Further, there are over 1,110 coffee farms on 9,400+ acres throughout the state. This number of farms expected to be served by ONE extension agent is unprecedented and unrealistic. In comparison, FIVE agents statewide serve 866 floriculture, ornamentals, nursery, mushroom, sod, and greenhouse-grown crops farms.

These numbers tell a story that my Extension program is spread too thin and that the coffee and orchard crops industries **are highly underserved**.

In closing, the Extension Agent position described in SB865_HD1 will support Hawaii's top agricultural commodities and provide them with greater opportunities to combat pests and diseases and increase their farm and business' resilience and sustainability. With this position, we hope to mirror other UH-CTAHR Extension programs by **building capacity to better support the coffee, macadamia, and tropical fruit industries one valuable Extension Agent at a time.**

I humbly ask that you support SB865_HD1 by approving and funding the position in 2025.
Thank you!

Sincerely,
Andrea Kawabata
Extension Agent for Coffee and Orchard Crops
Kealahou, HI 96750

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 10:56:34 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
casey halpern	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill, as a coffee farmer ctahr is a very important

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 11:39:46 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Nora	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have been a coffee farmer in Holualoa for over 20 yrs. It's an important crop for our state. I would not have been able to do this without the support and educational info supplied to me by UH Cooperative extension. With the increase of issues in the industry their ability to service the community has been running thin. They need more help. That's why I want the legislature to approve this bill. Mahalo

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 2:07:31 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Denis O'Leary	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting my written testimony in strong support of SB865, for the funding of an Extension agent position at the Kona Agricultural Extension Service office. This measure will support the Kona coffee industry in its production of one of the premiere coffees in the world and Hawaii's macadamia nut and tropical fruit farmers, representing the agrarian identity of the Big Island.

The time is surely at hand to promote this unique aspect of our state since our tourist based economy has seemingly been severely compromised by recent events.

Time is critically important in moving this Bill forward. Hawaii's economy is very fragile right now.

Thank you for your consideration.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 2:45:35 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Shultise	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. I am a Kona Coffee and Fruit Farmer. I rely upon the expertise of CTAHR and the Extension Agent as do my neighbors in Kona.

Please pass this bill and fund it this year.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 4:55:19 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
HC Bittenbender	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB865 to create an assistant extension agent position at the Kona Extension Office in College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience, University of Hawaii at Manoa. The assistant extension agent would join as permanent staff an already high functioning team led by the senior extension agent. The additional support is for the coffee, macadamia, cacao and tropical fruit farmers. Kona Extension Office has great need to address the educational challenge prompted by the recent arrival of the two most serious coffee pest and disease- coffee berry borer and coffee leaf rust. Further the macadamia industry is facing a new pest- the macadamia felted coccid.

Successful biocontrol methods have been identified. The educational effort with Big Island and coffee farmers on other islands to manage these problems is now the challenge. The assistant extension agent will assist the Kona extension agent to meet that challenge through education program in work shops and on-farm demonstrations..

The situation is particularly acute as there are few remaining faculty in CTAHR assigned to coffee, macadamia, cacao and other tropical fruits with regard to production and breeding research and extension.

H.C 'Skip' Bittenbender, PhD

Retired CTAHR, UHM State-wide Specialist for Coffee, Cacao and Kava

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 6:18:52 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolyn Witcover	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

[SB865_HD1](#) appropriates funding for one permanent, full-time EXTENSION AGENT position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension to support the coffee and orchard crops extension and applied research program at the Kona Research Station in the County of Hawaii. I am a coffee farmer and this industry is the #3 commodity in the state. Given the challenges of growing coffee the last several years in particular, we need the support of more than one dedicated agent. In addition, we need this funding asap so there is no reduction in support. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 6:20:09 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Henry Wojtczak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a Kona coffee farmer and owner of Grant's Heavenly Grounds Kona Coffee farm, I fully support [SB865 HD1](#) which appropriates funding for one permanent, full-time EXTENSION AGENT position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension. UH-CTAHR provides tremendous support to the coffee and orchard crops extension and applied research program at the Kona Research Station in the County of Hawaii. The extension agent position is greatly needed to provide support to Hawaii's coffee industry (#3 agricultural commodity in Hawaii) and the macadamia nut (#7) and tropical fruit industries in Hawaii County.

Kona coffee is synonymous with the island of Hawaii, and with each passing year coffee farmers face mounting challenges to growing and selling coffee. The assistance and expertise we receive from UH-CTAHR personnel is critical to our success. I would like to see this bill passed and funded this year.

Mahalo,

Henry Wojtczak

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 6:40:55 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tracie K Matsumoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Agricultural farmers in Hawaii face additional challenges to be profitable such as higher labor cost, increased cost for fertilizers and pesticides, and year long attack by pests and diseases. To be productive and profitable, they need to be innovative and keep up with new information on crop management. This position is important for providing that information to the farmers and should be supported.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 7:21:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sammi Piasecki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As our state continues to reach for its objective of food sustainability, we need experts who are able to oversee multiple crops and assist farmers in identifying and resolving issues.

Please approve this request for another extension agent. Our current agents are amazing, but they are stretched very thin. Adding one more person would alleviate some of the stress on us farmers. When we find an issue, we need answers quickly, before the pest or new disease spreads.

I appreciate your time and effort in this matter, and on behalf of ALL farmers here on the Big Island, please pass this bill.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 7:47:19 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

A good idea to increase the production from an area with tremendous potential. Mahalo!

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 8:41:45 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Matthew Miyahira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB865 to create a second extension agent position to serve the coffee & orchard crops industry. The existing program provides valuable support for coffee growers across the state as pests such as Coffee Berry Borer (CBB), Coffee Root-knot Nematode (CRKN), and Coffee Leaf Rust (CLR) continue to spread. The extension team in Kona provides growers with the knowledge to manage these pests while keeping themselves and their workers safe.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 8:43:34 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
molly murphy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support funding for one permanent, full-time EXTENSION AGENT position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension to support the coffee and orchard crops extension and applied research program at the Kona Research Station in the County of Hawaii.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 8:50:55 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debbie Donald	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Farming is difficult enough without the loss of our ag associates. Don't make the mistake of failing to support farmers by failing to pass this bill.

TESTIMONY OF STUART T. NAKAMOTO
Extension Economist/Specialist at UH-CTAHR

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MARCH 12, 2025
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 309

SENATE BILL NO. 865, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 865. My name is Stuart T. Nakamoto. I am an Extension Economist/Specialist at the UH-CTAHR however I am testifying on my own behalf and not for the CTAHR. I strongly support SB865.

Others have referred to the farmgate value of the coffee industry and other crops being affected. In addition, there are many processing and marketing activities that support and contribute to farm families, their communities, and the overall state economy.

CTAHR provides statewide support for the coffee industry with a single extension agent and a grant-funded temporary assistant. They have been functioning as a strong team, but the industry is at a critical juncture -- external funding is being cut just when assistance is needed to cope with Coffee Leaf Rust, Coffee Berry Borer and other pests. As evidenced by their testimony, the industry strongly supports a permanent position for an Educational Support Associate.

I humbly ask that you support Senate Bill 865.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 10:35:10 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Harold M Hoogasian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for supporting the ag needs of Kona.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 10:53:26 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Harriet Taniguchi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This position will support small coffee and tropical fruit growers even on Maui because we receive valuable information on how to treat insects and appropriate fertilizer and soil conditions. Also they provide coffee leaf rust and nematode resistant plants. I trust that you will support this position which in turn supports the small local niche farmers. Thank you.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 11:04:02 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gina Bagarino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support bill SB865-HD1 for a full time Extension Agent within the UH CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension. This is a vital position to support the coffee and orchard crops industry in Hawaii County. Current and new Farmers will have guidance and updates in managing their farm.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 11:32:31 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
bobbie becker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to ask that you SUPPORT this bill as it appropriates funding for one permanent, full-time EXTENSION AGENT position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension to support the coffee and orchard crops.

I have been farming coffee on Maui for the past 24 years. During that time I have learned much from the Kona Cooperative Extension service. At first it was the basics of coffee farming but since the arrival of Coffee Borer Beetle and Coffee Leaf Rust it has been much more. Now I am dependant on the office for information about a variety of pest and fungus management products. This include how to safely apply and store them. As a very busy farmer it is vital to my business success that there are knowledgable people who are available (at no direct charge to me), who can answer my questions.

PLEASE SUPPORT this bill.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 12:42:53 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alla Kostenko	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a Ka'u farmer, I strongly support this bill.

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 1:22:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Okamura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing again in support of SB865_HD1 . In the past 10 years Kona farmers have experienced numerous challenges from insects, disease, and climate changes. We rely more and more on the Extension Service for help and advice. Importantly Andrea and her team translate the myriad of technical and scientific data to strategies that farmers can use. As a result we have options. As a coffee producer, I was able to purchase a rust resistant coffee variety that Andrea had selected, tested, and cupped and then made available to Kona farmers.

The fact that the frequency of threats is varied and increasing is worrisome to all the major crop producers (coffee, avocado, macadamia). SB865 will give us the added manpower we urgently need today. Thank you. Carol Okamura

Testimony in Support of SB865-HD1 Relating to Agriculture

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is SongYi Paik, and I strongly support SB865, which seeks to establish a permanent extension agent position within the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources' (CTAHR) Kona Cooperative Extension. This position is essential to strengthening research, outreach, and farmer education efforts to address the critical challenges facing Hawai'i's coffee industry and other orchard crops.

Hawai'i's coffee industry is one of the state's most valuable agricultural commodity. However, coffee growers continue to face significant threats, particularly from two devastating pests:

1. Coffee Berry Borer (CBB): First detected in Kona in 2010, CBB has since spread to multiple islands, reaching Lāna'i in 2020. CBB infestations can cause severe yield losses, particularly when harvests are delayed (Barrera, 2008)¹. Effective management requires continuous farmer education, research, and outreach to ensure the adoption of best practices.
2. Coffee Leaf Rust (CLR): First detected in Hawaii in 2020, CLR has now spread to Maui, Hawai'i Island, O'ahu, and Lāna'i. CLR leads to premature leaf drop, weakening plants and significantly reducing coffee cherry production. Further research is urgently needed to identify resistant coffee varieties, assess their viability for Hawai'i's unique growing conditions, and educate farmers on effective management strategies.

Despite the industry's statewide presence, coffee growers are underserved due to geographic remoteness and the limited capacity of existing CTAHR personnel. Establishing a permanent extension agent position will provide much-needed assistance to extension faculty, enhance community outreach, and bolster research efforts aimed at mitigating CBB and CLR.

Supporting other orchard crop industries is just as important as supporting the coffee industry. Macadamia, banana, papaya, and other tropical fruits are vital to farm production and local food consumption. However, the Kona Cooperative Extension currently houses only one permanent extension agent for those crops, even though various crops and the number of farms cannot be adequately covered by a single professional. The second extension agent position will address industry challenges more broadly, covering different aspects through collaboration with the existing extension agent.

This new position is not just an investment in research and education; it is an investment in the sustainability of Hawai'i's coffee industry. I respectfully urge the committee to support SB865-HD1 and ensure that coffee and tropical fruit growers across the state receive the assistance they need to protect their livelihoods and maintain the legacy of Hawai'i-grown crops.

¹ Barrera J. F. 2008. Coffee pest and their management. In. Capinera J. L. (Ed). Encyclopedia of Entomology. 2nd edition. Springer. Pp. 961-998.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important measure.

Sincerely,

SongYi Paik
Assistant Extension Agent
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience
University of Hawaii

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 2:47:48 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Juli Burden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As someone who has worked in the coffee industry for over 20 years and specifically in Hawai‘i’s coffee industry for the last 10 years, I am writing in strong support of SB865 (and HB500), which appropriates funding for one permanent, full-time Educational Support Associate (APT) position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension. This role would provide critical support to the coffee and orchard crops extension and applied research program.

Throughout my career, I’ve witnessed firsthand how essential timely, science-based guidance is for our coffee producers. Hawai‘i’s unique status as an island state adds layers of complexity to agricultural management, particularly when it comes to accessing and implementing pest management tools. The need for strong, locally grounded extension services has only grown more urgent in recent years.

Coffee farmers in Hawai‘i are facing extraordinary challenges, especially from coffee berry borer (CBB) since 2010 and coffee leaf rust (CLR) since 2020—two of the most damaging pests affecting coffee globally. Managing these pests here requires not only sophisticated, seasonally timed strategies but also a working knowledge of one of the strictest regulatory environments for agricultural inputs in the country. Navigating that landscape successfully takes expertise, relationships, and consistency—things that are hard to maintain without enough boots on the ground.

While the current extension team works incredibly hard, the scope of these challenges is immense. One more dedicated team member would significantly increase their capacity to respond to farmer needs in real time, while also supporting broader efforts in research, outreach, and regulatory advocacy.

This proposed position would serve as a critical link between farmers, researchers, and policymakers—supporting on-farm implementation of both chemical and biological control tools, evaluating resistant coffee varieties, and helping ensure compliance with Hawai‘i’s environmental protections. In essence, it would give our industry a much-needed resource to adapt, evolve, and remain resilient.

Investing in this role is an investment in the long-term success of Hawai‘i’s coffee industry—an industry that holds deep cultural, agricultural, and economic value to our state. I urge you to support SB865 / HB500 and help provide the targeted, practical support our farmers need to thrive.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Juli Burden

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 2:54:48 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
DOUGLAS DREW	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of SB865

I am a coffee and orchard crops farmer on Maui.

We are underserved with public Extension service visits only once every 3-4 months.

We are in need of extension advice given the new labeling law and associated regulations, CLR disease, CBB pest and resilience measures we must implement in response to climate change and water restrictions

Your passage of SB865 would be greatly appreciated and taking effect in July, 2025.

Sincerely

Douglas Clive Drew

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 3:00:29 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jensen Uyeda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and committee members, my name is Jensen Uyeda. I am submitting testimony as an individual in support of bill SB865, which would appropriate funds to establish a permanent Extension Agent position for CTAHR’s Kona Cooperative Extension. I currently serve as a CTAHR Extension Agent on Oahu, working with edible crops, and I understand Cooperative Extension's vital role in our communities.

Cooperative Extension plays a crucial role in sharing science-based information through non-traditional educational programs for the agricultural community. The Kona extension programs serve the coffee industry on Hawaii Island and across the state. This industry ranks among the highest-grossing agricultural sectors, generating over \$48 million. In recent years, it has faced significant production challenges, notably from coffee berry borer (CBB) and coffee leaf rust (CLR), which may lower yields and raise production costs. The education programs offered by the Kona Extension have been essential for growers’ success in addressing these obstacles. However, the program's capacity is limited, featuring only one extension agent and a temporary grant-funded educational support associate. Securing funding for a permanent position would enhance the extension program’s capability to prioritize research and educational initiatives statewide. Moreover, it would bolster the program's capacity to manage the Kona research station, where much of the research focuses on developing strategies to counteract the issues caused by CBB and CLR.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony in Support of SB865_HD1 - CTAHR Extension Agent Position

Chair Luke and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

My name is Dr. Taya Brown. I am a postdoctoral researcher with an extensive background in coffee farming systems around the world, currently supporting Hawaii's coffee industry. I am writing in strong support of SB865_HD1, which would establish a permanent, full-time Extension Agent position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension to support the coffee and orchard crops extension and applied research program at the Kona Research Station. I urge the committee to fund this essential position this year.

As a postdoctoral researcher working directly with Hawaii's coffee industry, I can attest to the urgent need for additional extension support. Coffee stands as Hawaii's third most valuable agricultural commodity, while macadamia nuts rank seventh. Together with our expanding tropical fruit industries, these crops represent not just significant economic value, but also form the foundation of Hawaii's agricultural identity and heritage. The reach of this position would extend far beyond coffee, providing vital support to multiple orchard crop industries throughout the state.

Our current extension staff, who are extremely dedicated and hardworking, are overwhelmed by the scope and complexity of challenges facing these industries, as are the producers navigating these issues in the fields and markets:

- Coffee Berry Borer (CBB) has been in Hawaii since 2010 and Coffee Leaf Rust (CLR) since 2020. These are by far the two most antagonistic pests in coffee, globally and throughout history. Now, having finally reached Hawaii, these two immense pressures pose ongoing threats that require intensive, year-round management strategies that must fit well within Hawaii's strict regulatory framework
- Hawaii's unique island ecosystem necessitates exceptionally rigorous controls on both chemical and biological control products, creating complex challenges for making the needed tools available to farmers. The best tools for these pests are in use globally and need to be implemented in Hawaii to maintain production and high cup-quality of Hawaii's coffees to maintain competitiveness on the global market. Currently effective tools: chemical and biological products that effectively combat these pests without causing environmental harm or reducing farm profitability, CLR-resistant coffee varieties (a massive consideration for farmers who need help navigating decisions to implement, and how to implement), cultural field management methods to keep pressures from CBB and CLR as low as possible season-to-season (infected coffee cherry and leaves left in un-picked and un-managed fields become a reservoir for fungal and insect pests, impacting neighboring farms and increasing the pest populations for future years). All of these demand dedicated expertise to navigate at the policy and regulatory level, research to identify the best methods for Hawaii and its varied growing regions, and sustained connection with farmers navigating the issues and trialing methods and tools.
- The scale of our orchard crop industries requires additional extension capacity to maintain consistent contact with farmers and provide timely technical guidance. With current pest pressures and changing rain patterns, amidst unprecedentedly rising costs of

products and services needed to maintain, these industries need help. Hawaii's coffee industry value: **\$62.7 million (HDOA, 2024)**; papaya industry value: **\$6.5 million (HDOA, 2023)**; **Mac nut industry value: \$62.7 million (Hawaii Grown, 2022) - this is just monetary value, which is beyond substantial, and doesn't even take into account the cultural value or tourism value driven by interest in these crops.**

- Managing multiple high-value crops demands coordinated support across industries to maximize effectiveness and ensure sustainable production and even the literal existence of these industries to any scale whatsoever in this state

A second Extension Agent would significantly enhance our capacity to:

- Provide more frequent and comprehensive on-farm support to understand and address specific grower needs
- Develop and implement pest management strategies tailored to Hawaii's unique conditions
- Coordinate vital research across coffee, macadamia, and tropical fruit industries
- Bridge the gap between regulatory requirements and practical field implementation
- Support farmers in adopting new technologies and best practices for improved productivity

The current strain on our extension resources risks the long-term sustainability of these crucial agricultural and vastly important CULTURAL sectors. Hawaii is the seat for many of these crops in the entirety of the United States - Hawaii is where they are grown and growing these crops here keeps us competitive on the world stage. The position in question represents a critical opportunity to strengthen support for Hawaii's valuable orchard crop industries.

I strongly urge the committee to fund this position in the current fiscal year. This investment is essential for maintaining and (hopefully) growing these vital agricultural sectors that contribute significantly to our state's economic stability, agricultural diversity, and cultural heritage. In my position have had the pleasure to interact directly coffee farmers on almost all coffee producing islands, and extensively across Hawaii Island where the highest concentration of coffee farmers resides. Just yesterday I met with one of the largest producers of coffee in the Kau region, who was in tears for most of our discussion because of the level of challenge they are up against and the looming decisions that will have to be made given the myriad "perfect storm" of market and natural pressures. They told me they will not be in business in a year without help.

With the new pressures on coffee, amidst a world of tariffs and other issues causing instability in the coffee industry as a whole, coffee will become obsolete in Hawaii if it does not receive support in all the forms mentioned in this letter.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important measure. Thank you so very much for hearing us and doing your part to support our state's legacy.

Sincerely,

Taya Brown



SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 6:00:45 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyson Gordon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Rep. Yamashita, Rep. Takenouchi and members of the Finance Committee,

I am a fruit grower in Kona and write to you in FULL SUPPORT of SB865_HD1 and a CTAHR extension agent position to support the coffee and orchard crops industries in Hawai'i. These are very important and large industries that need more agents and staff to provide farmer outreach for the pests like avocado lace bug, coffee berry borer, and coffee leaf rust that devastate trees, fruits, yields, and farmers' ability to make a living. I humbly ask that you please support and fund this bill this year.

Thank you!

Chair Luke and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

I am writing in strong support of SB865_HD1 to establish a permanent, full-time Extension Agent position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension. As an agricultural product sales representative from Simplot and a long-time member of the Big Island community since 1999, I have a unique perspective on the critical need for additional extension support across our orchard crop industries, which I am happy to share with you today.

In my role serving Hawaii Island's diverse farming communities, I provided \$4.6 million worth of agricultural products and materials in 2024 alone, all directly supporting the viability and profitability of these vital industries. More importantly, I work closely with the individuals and families who comprise these industries - these are not just statistics, but real people facing real challenges.

The current challenges our farmers face include:

- Reliance on outdated research data from other regions of the world that may not apply to Hawaii's unique growing conditions and environmental protections, or to our cultural norms
- Limited access to timely diagnostics and assessments when new pests or diseases emerge, leaving farmers lacking the necessary information with which to make difficult decisions about management
- Difficulty in navigating complex decisions about appropriate agricultural inputs and management strategies and their ramifications and impacts, economically, culturally, and environmentally
- Insufficient technical support for implementing new technologies and best practices, both to keep in pace with other parts of the world, and to address newly emerging pressures like CBB and CLR in coffee
- Lack of availability of products and materials which are available to farmers in other parts of the world, and long delays in their arrival to Hawaii

In my daily work across multiple sectors - coffee, macadamia nut, papaya, avocado, lychee, rambutan, breadfruit, cacao, and other tropical fruits - I rely heavily on research and expertise from USDA and UH to provide accurate, actionable information to farmers. I've personally witnessed the dramatic difference between having sufficient versus insufficient information when helping farmers navigate critical decisions about their operations.

A dedicated Extension Agent would provide critical support by:

- Conducting Hawaii-specific research to develop locally-adapted solutions that respond to our unique combination of natural environment and cultural landscape
- Offering rapid diagnostic services and management recommendations that keep pace with emerging issues from pests, markets, and other pressures
- Providing evidence-based guidance on agricultural input selection and implementation
- Facilitating knowledge transfer between farmers, industry professionals, research institutions, and product sales outfits like Simplot

As someone who knows these farmers personally and understands their struggles, I can attest that the economic impact of having - or not having - current, locally-relevant information is beyond substantial. Our macadamia nut industry alone, valued at approximately \$50 million annually, requires dedicated support to maintain its competitive edge. Similarly, our coffee industry, as Hawaii's third most valuable agricultural commodity, and the main coffee-producing region of the entire United States, faces unprecedented challenges that demand immediate attention and expertise.

The current gap in extension support often leads to delayed responses and significant economic losses for our farming communities. This has impacts well beyond just these farms and farmers, affecting the tourism they drive to the state and the Big Island, and the families who depend on these industries for their livelihoods.

I strongly urge the committee to fund this position in the current fiscal year. This investment will directly support not just the sustainability and growth of Hawaii's agricultural sector, but the human beings and families who comprise these industries. As someone who has served this community for over 25 years, I can assure you that this support is crucial for the future of both our agricultural industries and the people who make them possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important measure.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Jordan

Agricultural Product Sales Representative, Simplot, Hawaii Island

SB-865-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 10:13:59 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Luis F Aristizabal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear House Finance Committe members,

The coffee industry in Hawaii is relevant because its generation of employment and its economic value. Over the twelve years coffee farmers in Hawaii had suffered two major invasive pests, the coffee berry borer and more recently the coffee leaf rust. In addition, hight cost of agricultural inputs and labor are making coffee production and its viability more difficul. Therefore, technical support is essential for crop improvement, increase of coffee production and use of limited sources efficiently. This is possible thanks to the agricultural research and extesion programs services that support farmers. Growers that produce Coffee, macadamia nut and tropical fruits require technical support to be successful with those perennial crops. The role of Extension Agents is vital to support coffee growers and producers and help to address the issues that affect the coffee industry. The Kona Cooperative Extension is doing a great job even with limiataion of techical personnel. Therefore, more productive work and greater benefits are expected with the approval of the full permanent posistion "Extesion Agent" in the County of Hawaii.

Best regards!

Luis F. Aristizabal

Coffee grower

Independent Consultant