

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEXTER KISHIDA
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 AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024
9:15 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

HOUSE BILL 2590
RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2590. This bill establishes the Hawaii farm to food bank program and Hawaii food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the state. The Department expresses our **strong support**.

Farm to Food bank programs are a win-win program, helping alleviate food insecurity in our communities, while opening additional markets to our farmers and ranchers. With a stable source of funding, food banks are a consistent customer for our farmers. The fragility of our food supply chains was made apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hawaii farmers rose up and continued to feed their communities.

In addition, Farm to Food bank programs make healthy fresh foods grown and raised in Hawaii available to everyone, not just those that can afford it. Due to the ability for food banks to change their inventory quickly, this program would allow the food banks to act as 'ballast', purchasing when there are unexpected abundance in the market.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





LATE

HB2590
RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

February 14, 2024

9:15 AM

House Conference Room 325

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB2590** which would appropriate funds to allow the Hawai‘i Food Bank to purchase food from local farmers. OHA believes that food security, including access to culturally relevant, healthy, regionally produced foods are critical to the safety and security of the people of Hawai‘i.

In the aftermath of the devastating wildfires of August 2023 that caused significant loss of life and destruction to the Lahaina community, the State House of Representatives found that the Hawai‘i Foodbank only has about 3 weeks of food on hand at any given time, and that the Hawai‘i Foodbank is limited by storage capacity.¹ The House further noted that in the event of a disaster that affects the operability of the Port of Honolulu, food resupply could be disrupted or cut off across the State of Hawai‘i.² In light of the vulnerabilities to Hawai‘i’s food supply in the event of a disaster, it is critical that Hawai‘i prioritizes food security for the safety of all the people of Hawai‘i.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) noted that as of 2021, 93% of all farms in Hawai‘i were family farms and accounted for 55% of farmland and 52% of all agricultural products sold and government payments.³ The USDA additionally noted that small family farms with a gross cash farm income of less than \$350,000 per year accounted for 91% of all Hawai‘i farms.⁴ Many small farmers in Hawai‘i face challenges such as “increased competition from industrial-scale farming operations both domestically and overseas, as well as not being positioned to absorb rising operational costs like these larger competitors.”⁵

¹ State of Hawai‘i House of Representatives, *Laulima for Lahaina: Final Report of the House of Representatives Lahaina Wildfire Interim Working Groups*, House of Representatives, December 2023, p. 27 -28.

² *Id.* at p.30.

³ United States Department of Agriculture, *Family-owned farms account for 93% of Hawaii farms, according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture Typology Report*, National Agricultural Statistics Service Hawaii Field Office, February 8, 2021, p. 1.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems. *Hawai‘i Agritourism: Examining how Agritourism can be Responsibly Implemented to Support Small Farmers and Ecological and Cultural Preservation in the Hawaiian Islands*. April, 2023, p. 21.



[Measure number, title]
[Meeting type] of the [Body]

By supporting local farmers and the Hawai'i Foodbank through funding to allow the Hawai'i Foodbank to purchase food from local farmers, this measure will not only increase food security in Hawai'i, but also support local farmers, the vast majority of which are small, family-owned farms, allowing our local farmers to better compete with out-of-state competitors.

OHA appreciates the opportunity to share our mana'o on **HB2590** and urges the legislature to **PASS** this measure. Mahalo nui loa.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualii, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
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Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

February 12, 2024

**TESTIMONY OF ADDISON BULOSAN
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON
HB 2137, RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM
AND
HB 2590, RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Wednesday, February 14, 2024
9:15 a.m.
Conference Room 325
Via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Gates and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2137, Relating to the Hawai'i Farm to Food Bank Program and HB 2590, Relating to Food Security. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council.

I wholeheartedly support the intent of HB 2137 and HB 2590, which would greatly affect the Kaua'i community.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2137 and HB 2590. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

ADDISON BULOSAN
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

AAO:slr



WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

February 14, 2023

Representative Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

RE: House Bill 2590 – RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY
Hearing date: February 14, 2023, 9:15 a.m.

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Young Brothers, LLC (“YB”) offering **SUPPORT** for House Bill 2590 – Relating to Food Security.

YB is a common carrier by water, transporting property by tug and barge between the islands of O’ahu, Hawai’i, Kaua’i, Maui, Moloka’i, and Lāna’i. YB is currently the only water carrier authorized to transport property under Chapter 271G, Hawaii Revised Statutes (“HRS”) (i.e., the Hawaii Water Carrier Act), subject to the regulatory authority of the Public Utilities Commission of the State of Hawaii (“PUC”). Since 1900, customers across Hawaii have relied on YB’s frequent, regular, and universal sailings to serve as the bridge that connects all communities in this island-state.

This measure would appropriate funds for food bank purchases from local farmers, with the funds to be administered by request for proposal via the Hawaii Department of Agriculture.

Food security remains a critical issue in Hawaii. This measure will help address these food security challenges while also investing in local agriculture. The Hawaii Foodbank’s Farm to Foodbank program, which was launched in March of 2020, has successfully provided healthy, locally-grown produce within communities across the state by working with partner agencies and organizations to distribute food to the community. This measure will support such efforts going forward.

For the reasons stated above, I offer **SUPPORT** for this measure.

Thank you for your service to the State of Hawaii, and for the opportunity to testify offering comments on this measure.

Sincerely,

Jay Ana
President



February 14, 2024

House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

RE: Testimony in support of HB 2590, Relating to Food Security

Dear Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, I am writing in **strong support of HB 2590**, which appropriates funds for food bank purchases from local farmers, with the funds to be administered by request for proposal via the department of agriculture.

Food insecurity is a critical issue in Hawai'i, where one in six residents lacks comprehensive access to healthy, nutritious food. One in four children is food insecure. Hawai'i has the highest cost of living in the nation, and inflation has driven food prices up by more than 25% since before the pandemic—greatly exacerbating the problem and putting far too many families at risk of going hungry, or making impossible choices between food and rent, food and medicine, or food and transportation. Food insecure households are especially vulnerable to a natural disaster, as they do not have the capacity to set aside a fourteen-day supply of food and water.

The Farm to Food Bank program addresses these critical needs while investing in our local food systems at the same time. Every dollar in the Farm to Foodbank program does double duty—not only is it invested in local agriculture, supporting our local farmers, helping to buoy our local economy and food system, and decreasing our dependence on imported food, but it allows us to provide fresh, healthy, Hawai'i-grown produce and proteins to those we serve. We know that food insecurity is highly correlated with negative health outcomes such as diabetes and heart disease, and that as budgets grow tighter, households tend to shift towards less expensive food options—which are often highly processed and significantly less healthy. The ability to provide fresh produce to those we serve will have a long-term positive effect on the health of our entire community.

Hawai'i Foodbank established our Farm to Foodbank program during the pandemic through a partnership with the Hawai'i Farm Bureau, with a commitment to purchase locally produced foods from local farmers and ranchers when their regular markets shut down. For the first three years of the Farm to Foodbank program, Hawai'i Foodbank purchased and distributed more than seven million pounds of local produce and proteins, funded primarily through COVID-era federal pandemic relief funds. Since those funds have lapsed, we have continued to fund our Farm to Foodbank program through private philanthropic support and other sources, and are currently purchasing between 25,000 – 30,000 pounds of local produce per week, including culturally relevant products such as poi, 'uala, and 'ulu. HB2590 would allow us to continue and grow these important programs.



Hawai'i Foodbank is Hawai'i's largest hunger relief organization, fiercely dedicated to our mission of nourishing our 'ohana today while working to end hunger tomorrow. We work with a network of more than 200 partner agencies across O'ahu and Kaua'i to provide food assistance to an average of more than 150,000 people each month.

Hawai'i Foodbank provides all food, including locally purchased produce, to our network of partner agencies free of charge, and our partner agencies then distribute that food into our communities directly. Last year, we distributed food for more than 16.2 million meals across the islands we directly serve, including nearly 5 million pounds of fresh produce. Together with the Maui Food Bank, serving Maui County, and The Food Basket, serving Hawai'i Island, our network of food banks and partner agencies provide food assistance to all those facing hunger across the State.

Mahalo for your consideration.

With aloha,

Amy Miller

President and CEO, Hawai'i Foodbank



**Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
Wednesday, February 14, 2024; 9:15 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2590 – RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY

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

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** House Bill No. 2590, RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

This bill, as received by your Committee, would appropriate \$2,000,000 in general funds for fiscal year 2024-2025, for food bank purchases from local farmers via request for proposals through the Department of Agriculture.

The HPCA asserts that the COVID-19 pandemic severely threatened the health and welfare of our citizens, especially Hawaii's underprivileged and rural communities. Entire families continue to struggle to put food on the table on a consistent basis. Our overreliance on tourism has weakened our ability to bounce back from COVID's dire economic realities. The only way for us to protect ourselves from the next global pandemic is for Hawaii to diversify its economic base and become more self-sufficient. And for us to do that, we need to grow more food.

Accordingly, the HPCA urges your favorable consideration of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.

Testimony of
Jonathan Ching
Government Relations Director

Before:
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
The Honorable Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
The Honorable Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair

February 14, 2024
9:15 a.m.
Conference Room 325 & Via Videoconference

Re: HB 2590, Relating to Food Security.

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2590, which appropriates funds for food bank purchases from local farmers, with the funds to be administered by request for proposal via the department of agriculture.

Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i SUPPORTS HB 2590.

Kaiser Permanente is one of the nation's largest not-for-profit health plans, serving 12.6 million members nationwide, and more than 274,000 members in Hawai'i. In Hawai'i, more than 4,200 dedicated employees and more than 650 Hawai'i Permanente Medical Group physicians and advanced practice providers work in our integrated health system to provide our members with coordinated care and coverage. Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i has more than 19 medical facilities, including our award-winning Moanalua Medical Center. We continue to provide high-quality coordinated care for our members and deliver on our commitment to improve the health of our members and the 1.4 million people living in the communities we serve.

Kaiser Permanente supports policies that ensure all Hawai'i residents have access to affordable, high-quality health care. Further, Kaiser Permanente supports "whole-person care," including the provision of access to services and resources that address beneficiaries' physical health, mental health, and social needs.

Kaiser Permanente prioritizes food security as an area of community health focus, meaning that all people, in all communities, have access to sufficient, affordable, and nutritious food that meets

their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy lifestyle. However, we know that food insecurity has increased due to the effects of inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Kaiser Permanente provides grants to Hawai'i food banks administering The Emergency Food Assistance Program's (TEFAP) Farm to Food Bank Program, which serves a critical role for many families facing food insecurities.

The grant funds served a twofold purpose through the food purchasing program. First, the funds are used as a match to draw down Federal funds, which require a 1:1 match. Additionally, Kaiser Permanente's grant funds support farm-direct bags of fresh produce for low-income seniors receiving a monthly supplemental food box through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), a USDA program that Hawai'i Foodbank runs in partnership with the Office of Community Services.

To ensure communities have reliable access to healthy food, Kaiser Permanente supports policies that minimize barriers to and maximize enrollment in federal nutrition assistance programs, such as SNAP, and support for federal nutrition standards for school meals, including meals with more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and less sodium and trans fats.

Our work is guided by our belief that access to nutritious food plays a critical role in supporting community health. Kaiser Permanente has also piloted interventions using medically tailored meals and launched a prescription produce program to help patients access fresh produce. By studying the effectiveness of these programs, Kaiser Permanente is building an evidence base for future policy interventions that reduce health care costs and improve patient outcomes.

We support HB 2590 because it will appropriate funds to food bank purchases from local farmers, which helps provide healthy, locally-grown produce and helps to continue to meet the food security needs of the people of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Wednesday, February 14, 2024 — 9:15 a.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports HB 2590, Relating to Food Security.

Dear Chair Gates and Members of the Committee:

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

Ulupono supports HB 2590, which appropriates funds for food bank purchases from local farmers, to be extended by request for proposal via the Department of Agriculture.

Over the last few years, one of the most pressing issues for many local families has been food insecurity. With many out of work and surviving on government unemployment support, communities have relied on the efforts of food banks and local food producers to meet their basic need to eat.

In response to the COVID pandemic, federal monies injected into Hawai'i through county initiatives helped grow a local farm-to-food bank effort, in which food banks were able to purchase local products for distribution to needy communities. This effort was a win-win-win, in that local food producers had a market to sell their products when hotels and restaurants shuttered their doors, local families received fresh and nutritious food products made locally island-wide, and food banks that were struggling to purchase shelf-stable food due to nationwide shortages were rescued by Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers who provided local food to their communities.

The Farm to Food Bank efforts across the state led to many important foundational relationships between local farmers, ranchers, and community feeding organizations that helped struggling communities cope with the social and economic consequences of the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, natural disasters, food supply chain disruptions, and state emergencies have become a harsh, consistent reality for our local communities. Food banks across the state will need support to meet these food security challenges, and continuing to strengthen the bonds between farms and food banks is a worthy investment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i



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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 14, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 2590
RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:15 AM

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

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 2590, which appropriates funds for food bank purchase from local farmers, to be expended by request for proposal via the Department of Agriculture.

The Coronavirus Pandemic disrupted Hawai'i's local food systems and caused many local producers to lose their local markets. Many catered to tourism, large-scale events, hotels, restaurants, cruise ships, farmers' markets, and school lunch programs, which were non-existent during Hawai'i's shutdown.

Like small businesses around the state, without open and consistent markets, local farmers and ranchers will decrease food production levels and will likely downsize and/or go out of business. To help address the state's food security during the pandemic, Hawai'i's Foodbanks partnered with local food producers to ensure that farmers and ranchers could survive.

At the onset of the pandemic, Hawai'i's Foodbanks partnered with farmers and ranchers to provide local agricultural produce and proteins for their food assistance programs. As organizations that aggregate and distribute food, Foodbank staff brought valuable logistical insight to these programs. The combined efforts of Hawai'i's Foodbanks, the Hawai'i Farm Bureau, and other partner organizations allowed tens of thousands of families to have access to food during unprecedented times. This win-win partnership connected local producers that lost markets and revenue sources due to COVID-19 with the Hawai'i Foodbank to meet the increased demands of feeding Hawai'i's communities.

HB 2590 will provide funds to Hawai'i's food banks that support non-profit and community feeding programs by providing locally grown or produced foods to communities in need. This will also help Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers while also providing local nutritional food to those who need it most.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Environmental Caucus of
The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

Agriculture & Food Security Committee

Wednesday, February 14, 2024, 9:15 am

House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

HOUSE BILL 2619 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL BIOSECURITY.

Position: Strong Support

Me ke Aloha, Chair Gates, Vice-Chair Kahaloa, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems:

SB2619 appropriates funds for the biosecurity program of the Department of Agriculture, to develop and implement projects for clean plant material, agricultural treatments, diagnostics, and pest management.

The Agriculture and Food Security Committee regards invasive species control and eradication as one of the most pressing issues facing our state. Along with a few other prominent issues, it stands out as the only way to preserve the Hawaii we know and love, the special place unlike any other, a fragile landscape of good will and prosperity maintained only by vigilance, persistence, and complete commitment. It is important to note that in ancient Hawaiian times, lazy attitudes and behavior could suffer draconian consequences.

strongly supports the proposed \$2M appropriation for this bill even though it requires exceeding the general fund expenditure ceiling, as it is a food security issue of exceptional priority, and as it provides support for local farmers in the quest to become more secure in their operations. Our committee believes this is another key element in providing successful food systems, supporting local growers who otherwise have a hard time competing with major producers where efficiencies of scale are available.

Our committee has worked with strategic partners across the community to arrive at the conclusion that food systems must be explored in order to derive a strategic plan to increase affordable fresh local produce food destined for local working family tables, alleviating our dependence on importing 85-90% of our food, increasing local food security and improving local nutrition. Direct support of the food bank and local growers through HB2137

We believe that Hawaii has too long emphasized export agriculture over local markets, in order to diversify the agricultural base and to produce revenues for the State, demonstrating agricultural productivity. Two casualties include degraded soils and nearshore waters, and affordable fresh local produce.

We strongly support the purchase of local produce in support of both ends of the market.

Mahalo for the opportunity to address this matter.

/s/ Charley Ice Acting Chair, Agriculture and Food Security Committee
Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

February 13, 2024

Subject: *H.B. 2590, Relating to Food Security*

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenoichi, and Members of the House Committee on Health and Homelessness,

The Hawaii Food+ Policy is in **support of HB 2590**. Our Intern, Nanea Keli, is an organic farmer and current student at UH West Oahu pursuing the Sustainable Community Food Systems program. As a farmer, she believes growing food is one of the most important duties in the world because the lives of people depend on adequate access to food and nutrition. But, she also knows just growing food cannot help anyone until it reaches the table. The need for funding is critical in assuring access to sustainable sources of food (like our local farmers) especially during these times of inflated food prices.

It's undeniable that current food producers in Hawaii are facing issues competing with continental suppliers. This in turn causes local products to increase price points that are not feasible to those who rely on local products and or want to support Hawaii's local economy. The good thing is there is a need that exists. The need to be more aggressive in purchasing food from our local food producers to feed the people; and this bill is a step in the right direction.

Mahalo,
Hawaii Food+ Plus Policy

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 2024, the cohort of interns are undergrads and graduate students from throughout the UH 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.

Voice of God Ministries

Pastor Elizabeth L. Kekua
P.O. Box 860173
Wahiawa, Hawaii 96786
EIN# 80-0877885
Phone (808) 373-0294
Email: vogm08@gmail.com

February 12, 2024

Testimony in support of HB2137, Relating to food security

Aloha Chair gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members:

I am testifying on behalf of Voice of God Ministries>

I support HB2590, which will appropriate funds for foodbank purchase from local farmers, to be expended by request for proposal via the Department of Agriculture.

Partnering with Hawaii Food Bank has not only helped us to bring food relief to the people of Hawaii but has enabled us to be able to assist people who are in need or just might need a little help to make it to the next month. Without this partnership, we would not be able to meet the demands or needs of the people. Once again, this would not be possible without your continued support. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Aloha,

Elizabeth Kekua (VOGM Pastor)

Hawaii State Legislature
Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
February 14, 2024

Immanuel Christian Church
P. O. Box 4821
Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

Dear Chair Cedric Asuega Gates and Committee Members:

We support House Bill (HB) 2137 and H.B. 2590, which seeks to establish and appropriate funds for the Hawaii farm to food bank program to fund food banks and emergency feeding organizations in the State to purchase, store, and transport fresh locally grown or produced food to food insecure communities. This program will serve the State's food needs, provide local food producers with a market to support their operations, and keep moneys circulating within the State to boost the local economy.

Our church is a partner agency with the Hawaii Food Bank and we serve those in our community who are less fortunate and in need of food. We are a small church in Kaneohe and our volunteers pick up food twice a week at the Hawaii Food Bank and deliver it to various locations in the downtown Honolulu area. The recipient individuals are so grateful for what they receive and it helps them to meet their immediate nutritional needs. The bill is a win-win for both the farm to food bank and addresses these food insecurity needs while also investing in local agriculture. The food is provided and distributed free of charge.

We urge your committee's passage of both H.B. 2137 and H.B. 2590. Thank you for consideration.



Lloyd D. Rogers
Immanuel Christian Church



To: Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday, February 14, 2024

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of HB2590

From: Andrew Ogata, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloe, and Committee Members:

The Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) strongly supports HB2590, which will appropriate funds for food bank purchase from local farmers, to be expended by request for proposal via the Department of Agriculture. Food insecurity was already one of Hawaii's biggest challenges prior to the COVID-19 epidemic and it is now reaching a crisis.

HHRC's mission is to *reduce harm, promote health, create wellness and fight stigma in Hawaii and the Pacific*. We focus our efforts on those disproportionately affected by social determinants of health, including but not limited to: people living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the transgender, LGBTQ and the Native Hawaiian communities.

During 2020 and 2021, HHRC partnered with the Hawaii Food Bank on food drops around the island and helps disseminate more than 500,000 pounds of food to thousands of families and saw first hand how desperate our families are to get healthy and fresh foods that they otherwise could not afford. We need our foodbanks to not only rely on donations but to get the resources they need so adequately address food insecurity in the islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Andrew Ogata, Director of Development, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 | Honolulu, HI 96813
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Executive Officers

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Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale Grocer, *Vice Chair*
Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp., *Secretary/Treas.*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *Executive Director*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Derek Kurisu, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, *Advisor*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 14, 2024
TIME: 9:15am
PLACE: Room 325

LATE

RE: HB2590 Relating to the Food Security

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, Members of the Committee,

HFIA is in support of this measure. Addressing food insecurity and strengthening our local agricultural sector are goals we all share. This measure will allow for the purchasing of food from local farmers by local food banks. This helps bolster our states food supply for those in need during every day circumstances, or in times of crisis. It also provides economic support for our local agricultural sector. It's also worth noting that many food banks around the state are frequently have shortages of fresh fruits and vegetables. This measure will help ensure that those who are utilizing our food banks have access to fresh local healthy foods. We encourage you to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

To: House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
Re: **HB 2590 – Relating to Food Security**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 14, 2024, 9:15 AM

Dear Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB 2590**. This bill appropriates funds for food bank purchase from local farmers, to be expended by request for proposal via the Department of Agriculture.

According to Feeding America, more than 50,000 – or one in six – Hawai'i children are facing hunger.¹ Especially with highest cost of living and the second-most expensive groceries in the nation,² it is nearly impossible for the low-income families in Hawai'i to afford to buy healthy food, such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

In addition, it is well established that the stresses of childhood poverty have both immediate and long-term effects on keiki's physical and mental health, behavioral self-control, academic achievement, and earnings as adults.³

That's why it's so important to support Hawai'i's food banks. They and their partner agencies help ensure that struggling families do not go hungry by distributing millions of pounds of food per year to those in need in our state.

Food banks were a lifeline during the pandemic when our state had some of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. But even with folks back at work, recent high inflation rates have led to our state's food banks to continue to see demand that's higher than before the pandemic.

This program has the added plus of supporting our local farms. Farm to food bank programs are a win-win, by providing healthy local food to those who need it and purchasing from local farmers.

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony. Please pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hawaii>

² <https://meric.mo.gov/data/cost-living-data-series>

³ <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/indicator/2014/06/childhood-poverty>



LATE

HIPHI Board

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John A. Burns School of Medicine,
Native Hawaiian Research Office

HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &
Evaluation

Community Health
Worker Initiatives

COVID-19 Response

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free
Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Hui

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce
Development

Date: February 13, 2024

To: Representative Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Re: HB 2590 Relating to the Hawai'i Farm to Food Bank Program

Hrg: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 9:15 AM

Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Instituteⁱ appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **Support of HB 2590**, which would provide funds to food banks to make purchases from local farmers.

Consistent Demand

Farmers sometimes produce supply beyond market demand, which often goes to waste, or farmers under produce because there is not always consistent market demand. Currently, this excess would go to waste or people are unable to obtain local foods because there is not enough. However, with a robust farm to food bank program, the food bank system can be consistent purchasers of locally sourced food.ⁱⁱ This system provides a steady demand for the local farming community, ensuring an opportunity for them to have consistent buyers of their foods. By the foodbanks consistently purchasing foods at fair market values, it helps our local food market. It is integral that farmers have consistent buyers so they can produce to scale. There is constant demand for fresh produce from the food banks, but it is often unavailable. This program can help fill that void by providing healthier food choices for our residents.

Help the Local Economy

This program will help local farmers sell more food within the State. The food they will go to those most in need here in Hawai'i that depend on the food bank system. This investment will flow in all sectors of our economy as farmers and food distributors spend their earned money on other goods and services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nate Hix'.

Nate Hix

Social Impact Policy Manager
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

ⁱ The Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, formerly known as the Obesity Prevention Task Force, was created by the legislature in 2012 and is comprised of over 60 statewide organizations. The HEAL Coalition works to make recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and health care environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents.

ⁱⁱ <https://kauainownews.com/2022/02/14/hawaii-food-basket-receives-donation-from-kaiser-for-new-program/>

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Feb 14, 2024, 10:51 am



MAUI
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
VOICE OF BUSINESS

LATE

**HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 325
Wednesday, February 14, 2024 AT 9:15 A.M.**

To The Honorable Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
The Honorable Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair
Members of the committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

SUPPORT HB2590 RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY

The Maui Chamber of Commerce would like to testify to **SUPPORT HB2590**.

The Chamber notes that within three months of the wildfires of August 8, 2023, Maui Food Bank surpassed its usual annual supply of three million pounds of food, demonstrating the State's need to expand its food storage capacity in the event of further disaster situations. Food insecurity is a rising critical issue in Hawaii. As the cost of food in the State has increased by more than five per cent in the last twelve months, addressing the ongoing food security needs of the people of Hawaii is imperative.

We support the idea of purchasing food from local farmers to help food banks as this benefits Hawaii's economy and local farmers. We urge the committee to include language for the food banks to work directly with local farmers and ranchers on their supply and needs, as well as the local restaurant industry to identify needed items.

Further, there are other organizations that address food insecurity on Maui and across the state, like Feed My Sheep. We strongly encourage the Legislature to broaden the scope of this bill, and the opportunity to receive grant funding, to any nonprofit organization addressing food insecurity.

For these reasons, we **SUPPORT HB2590**.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Feb 14, 2024, 10:52 am



LATE

February 13, 2024

Testimony in support of HB2590, Relating to food security

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members:

I am testifying on behalf of The Pantry by Feeding Hawai'i Together.

I support HB2590, which will appropriate funds for food bank purchase from local farmers, to be expended by request for proposal via the Department of Agriculture.

The Pantry is a food distribution center that provides hundreds of thousands of pounds of fresh food every month, however, a majority of those goods are imported from the mainland. This initiative not only supports local businesses, but mitigates the excess of imported goods from mainland sources. As a partner of the Hawaii Foodbank, we strive to provide fresh, local produce to our thousands of monthly clients. Bill HB2590 allows the Hawaii Foodbank to support local farmers and provide our community with equitable access to nutritious food.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Aloha,

Jennine Sullivan

Executive Director

Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Anabella Bruce
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
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Reba Lopez
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Chapter Presidents

Clarence Baber
Kohala, Hawai'i

Odysseus Yacalis
East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Andrea Drayer
Ka'u, Hawai'i

Kona, Hawai'i

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hana, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakala, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahalawai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Rufina Kaauiwai
Molokai

Negus Manna
Lāna'i

India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich
Waimanalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kauai

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Date & Time
Feb 14, 2024, 10:51 am



LATE

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems 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. **HFUU supports HB2590.**

Food insecurity is a serious issue in Hawaii. Our state's farmers are a vital part of the solution, and the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program provides a crucial link between our farmers and those in need.

We believe it is essential to strengthen partnerships between the food banks and agricultural producers to bring fresh produce and other foods to households in need. Additionally, we are confident that the monetary appropriations will enable farmer and food banks to provide the much-needed food access for the state's residents.

The emphasis on local food sourcing is a strategic move towards enhancing the state's resilience in emergencies. By establishing a steady, local supply chain of essential food items, we mitigate the risks associated with external supply chain disruptions. Local sourcing ensures that, in times of crisis of local or global origin, our communities have reliable access to nutritious food.

In conclusion, the Hawaii Farmers Union strongly supports the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program. This program not only serves the State's immediate food needs but also provides a sustainable market for local food producers, keeping money circulating within the State to boost our local economy. We urge the legislature to pass this bill, recognizing its potential to significantly impact both our agricultural sector and the food security of our communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF

HB-2590

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 10:02:46 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
penny levin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support.

HB-2590

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 2:07:56 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeffrey Vigilla	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Food insecurity remains a critical issue in Hawaii.

- Farm to food bank addresses these food insecurity needs while also investing in local agriculture—a win-win.
- Hawai‘i Foodbank’s Farm to Foodbank program, launched in March 2020, has been a tremendous success, providing healthy, locally-grown produce to those we serve.
- Hawai‘i Foodbank works with a network of more than 200 partner agencies, or emergency feeding organizations, to distribute food to the community. Each partner agency receives food safety and civil rights trainings, and all food is provided to our agencies free of charge. We distributed 19.5 million pounds of food, or food for 16.2 million meals, through these channels in 2023, including nearly 5 million pounds of fresh produce.

HB-2590

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 4:18:47 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kilia Purdy-Avelino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Kilia Purdy-Avelino. I am a homesteader from Hoolehua, Molokai. I am in strong support of HB2590. Pre-COVID-19 pandemic, I worked for Alu Like which provided the youth program qualifying families with food from the food bank. There were about a dozen families/households. When COVID hit, food bank agencies were asked if anyone would be willing to put their contacts out for the public to be able to get these services. We did. And, we went from a dozen households to 80! Then, we started to notice that the food supply coming from Maui decreased. For a small island like Molokai with limited resources, it put us on high alert to find ways to resolve the problem. As a farmer, knowing other farmers who sold products with Sustainable Molokai's Mobile Market, and having conversations with some on excess produce, I approached the ED of Sustaibale Molokai to see if there was a way they could coordinate those farmers to help with our Molokai food bank supply. That initiative with many community partners - individuals and agencies, including the Maui/Molokai Food Bank, became known as Ho'oku'ikahi Aloha Molokai and took us farther than we could imagine paying for fresh Molokai farmed produce, shrimp, fish, and also working with the Molokai Hunting club and other community volunteers for deer meat, that supplied our island through the pandemic and still till today.

Watch a documentary on this Molokai initiative here <https://youtu.be/EfV8bQcXP2U?si=Dmk7TyJsYXdWvp91>

Mahalo,

Kilia Purdy-Avelino

HB-2590

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 5:05:21 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline S. Ambrose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY.

Appropriates funds for food bank purchase from local farmers, to be expended by request for proposal via the Department of Agriculture.

HB-2590

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:24:12 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hannah Hyun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of HB2590, which appropriates funds for food banks to purchase from local farmers. Food insecurity continues to be a huge problem in Hawaii. Hawaii Foodbank works with a network of more than 200 partner agencies to distribute food to our communities. Each partner agency receives safety and civil rights trainings, and all food is provided free of charge. Hawaii Foodbank distributed 19.5 million pounds of food (or food for 16.2 million meals), through these channels in 2023 - that includes nearly 5 million pounds of fresh produce!

HB-2590

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 7:46:56 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Craig K. Shikuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HB2590. Heartbreakingly, food insecurity remains one of Hawaii's most critical social issues. It is incredibly disheartening that many in our community, including children and older adults, do not have enough food to nourish their minds and bodies.

The Hawaii Foodbank's Farm to Foodbank program is a critical part of the effort to address food insecurity. The program also has the collateral benefit of investing in local agriculture. The program is a true "win-win" situation. From its inception in March 2020, the Farm to Foodbank program has provided healthy, locally-grown produce to the hungry. Food insecurity cannot be solved by giving any food; those the Foodbank serves need healthy, nourishing food, like locally grown produce, to thrive.

As a member of the Hawaii Foodbank board, I have seen up close the diligent, conscientious work done by the Foodbank's staff. They sincerely believe in the Foodbank's mission and strive each day to do the best for the people they serve, the Foodbank's partners and supporters, and the community at large. I assure you that this bill's funding will be well-spent and have a significant impact. Thank you.

Craig K. Shikuma

999 Bishop Street, Ste. 2600

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

HB-2590

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 9:23:38 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Violette K Nacapoy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 13, 2024

Testimony in support of HB2590, Relating to Food security

Aloha:

I am testifying on behalf of Giving Hope Hawaii.

I support HB2590, which will establish the Hawaii farm to food bank program and Hawaii food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.

Without the help and partnership with Hawai'i Foodbank, Giving Hope Hawaii would not be able to feed over 3800 families a month suffering from food insecurity. Since January 2023 we have be able to service families, kupuna's and children with special needs from Waimanalo to Kahuku. Our pantry could not do this without the support from Hawaii Food Bank.

With Hawaii Foodbanks continued support and to get more food we can certainly stomp out food hunger in all our communities.

Our mission is simple: **To give glory to God and to promote human dignity.** Through the tireless efforts of our staff, volunteers, and corporate partners, we provide food and support to the hungry and needy on Oahu's Windward Side especially our Kūpuna and Keiki with special needs.

"For I was hungry and you fed me. For I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. For I was a stranger and you invited me into your home. For I was naked and you clothed me. For I was sick and you cared for me. For I was in prison and you visited me."

Mahalo for your consideration.

Aloha,

Violette Nacapoy

Chief of Operations, Director

Giving Hope Hawaii

HB-2590

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 9:48:46 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Blanche McMillan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I approve House Bill (HB2590) by Blanche McMillan.

LATE



February 14, 2024

House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

RE: Testimony in support of HB 2590, Relating to Food Security

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members,

My name is Charla Teves. I am a college student and a life-long resident of Honolulu. This year, I was named one of five national Stephen J. Brady Scholars by the Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation. I am testifying in support of HB 2590.

When I was a senior in high school, two Honolulu radio DJs mocked a popular singer for her experiences with childhood hunger. Along with the rest of our community, I was shocked by their insensitivity. It opened my eyes to the intensive needs right here in my hometown. I am asking for your help to adopt policies that will eliminate hunger in our lifetime.

One in five Hawaii children struggle with hunger, according to Feeding America. At more than 55,000 children, they would fill the Stan Sheriff Center four times over and still overflow into the parking lot. In 2021, I was one of 100 students nationwide awarded a Youth Service America and Sodexo Stop Hunger grant which enabled me to convene a Hawai'i virtual end hunger summit. Many state legislators, community leaders, students, and young adults convened to share their ideas such as supporting a statewide food policy and school gardens. I learned so much from the experience that I can no longer remain quiet. Since then, I have volunteered with many food drives and in other ways to help end hunger. Based on these experiences, I know for sure that your support of food banks in Hawaii will make a difference.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.