

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 17 2023

RE: H.B. No. 606  
H.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Thirty-Second State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2023  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Agriculture and Environment, to which was referred H.B. No. 606, H.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO MEAT PROCESSING,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Require the Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with other state agencies, to develop and implement a plan by July 1, 2025, to expand the meat processing capacity in the State to allow for meat from axis deer and other wild game to be processed for distribution by non-profit food distribution services; and
- (2) Appropriate funds for implementation.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Agriculture; Office of the Mayor of the County of Maui; one member of the County Council of the County of Maui; Maui County Farm Bureau; Ponoholo Ranch Limited; Hawai'i Forest Industry Association; Hawai'i Farmers Union United; Hawai'i Farm Bureau; Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.; and nine individuals. Your Committee received testimony in opposition to this measure from one individual. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Human Services.



Your Committee finds that axis deer in Maui County devastate crops, vegetation, and native species and their over-grazing of these plants severely impacts the environment by contributing to soil erosion, which can decrease soil fertility. Despite ongoing efforts to control the growing axis deer population, it is estimated that more than sixty thousand axis deer freely roam Maui County, which has particularly impacted the ranchers and farmers who rely on natural vegetation and robust soil fertility to sustain their livestock and crop rotations. Your Committee further finds that other states facing similar issues have implemented programs that aim to make more food available for underprivileged groups by allowing for the hunting and meat processing of wild game animals. This measure appropriates funds and requires the Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with other state agencies, to develop and implement a plan that allows for axis deer and other wild game to be processed for distribution by nonprofit food distribution services and expand the meat processing capacity in the State.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture and Environment that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 606, H.D. 1, and recommends that it pass Second Reading and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Agriculture and  
Environment,



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MIKE GABBARD, Chair



