

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2023
1:00PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224

SENATE BILL NO. 520
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 520. This bill establishes the farmer succession pilot program within the Department of Agriculture. Requires a report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds for the pilot program and farmer apprentice mentoring program. The Department respectfully provides comments.

The Department of Agriculture appreciates the intent of this measure. We agree that there is interest in this type of training. While we would be very pleased to participate in the creation of this program, we respectfully recommend that it be housed in the University of Hawaii's community college program which has expertise setting up vocational training programs. Education and training do not fall within any of our existing divisions.

Should this measure move to the next committee as is, in addition to the appropriation to implement the program, add a full time, permanent position under the Chairperson's office (AGR192), to direct this endeavor. We foresee this as a higher level General Professional V position, SR-24, with a budgeted salary of \$84,000.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



SB-520

Submitted on: 1/30/2023 6:10:31 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maureen Datta	Testifying for Adaptations Inc	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please note my strong support for this bill.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT
Wednesday, February 1, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports SB 520, Relating to Agriculture.

Dear Chair Gabbard 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 SB 520, which establishes the Farmer Succession Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and appropriates funds for the pilot program and the Farmer Apprentice Mentoring Program.

According to the 2017 USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Census of Agriculture, the average age of a Hawai'i farmer was 60.1 years. Additionally, 66% of Hawai'i's 7,328 farms statewide, or 4,868 farms, are between 1–9 acres and 78%, or 5,701 farms, produce less than \$25,000 in sales.¹ This data shows that there is an aging farmer workforce that works off of extremely tight profit margins. This measure is helpful in developing the next generation of local, successful producers here in Hawai'i.

We ask the committee to consider adding in an appropriation for the GoFarm Hawai'i statewide beginning farmer training program, as this effort has proven successful in teaching young, interested farmers not just how to grow products, but also the importance of business and market development.

As Hawai'i's local food issues become increasingly complex and challenging, we appreciate this committee's efforts to look at policies that support the future of local food production.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

¹https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1_Chapter_1_State_Level/Hawaii/

SB-520

Submitted on: 1/30/2023 9:31:04 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
"Phil" Augustus Acosta	Testifying for Aloha Harvest	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Harvest is in strong support of this bill.



Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Anabella Bruch
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Chapter Presidents

Madeline Ross
Kohala, Hawai'i

Odysseus Yacalis
East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Andrea Drayer
Ka'u, Hawai'i

Chantal Chung
Kona, Hawai'i

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hana, Maui

Reba Lopez
Haleakala, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahalawai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Rufina Kaauwai
Molokai

Negus Manna
Lāna'i

Brynn Foster
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich
Waimanalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Ray Maki
Kauai

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Environment Committee,

The Hawaii Farmers Union United (HFUU) 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 strongly supports SB520.

The future of farming in Hawaii depends on the next generation of farmers and the ability for existing farmers to pass on their knowledge, land, and resources to their children or other individuals who are committed to farming. However, the barriers to entry and the complexities of running a farm can be overwhelming, especially for those just starting out.

The farmer succession pilot program will provide much-needed support for the next generation of farmers, helping to ensure that Hawaii's agricultural heritage is preserved and that our communities continue to have access to fresh, locally grown food. The farmer apprentice mentoring program will provide critical on-the-job training and support for aspiring farmers, helping them to develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed. I strongly urge the legislature to support this bill and appropriate funds for these essential programs. They will be critical in supporting the growth and sustainability of our state's agricultural industry.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF



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

February 1, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 520
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chairs Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richard, 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 520, which establishes the farmer succession pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and appropriates funds for the pilot program and farmer apprentice mentoring program.

Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers are aging. The average age of the Hawai'i farmer exceeds 60 years old, and if they were in other professions would most likely be retired. Yet many of these farmers are those that provide to supermarkets, restaurants, hotels, and farmers' markets, and truly make a difference in reducing imports. Unfortunately for many, succession plans do not exist and as they retire, the lands go out of agricultural production. There is an urgent need for interns or apprentices that are willing to not only work on these farms but take over their operations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



January 31, 2022

Sen. Mike Gabbard, Chair
Sen. Tim Richards, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

RE: Testimony in support of SB 520, Relating to Agriculture

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawaii Foodbank, **I support SB 520**, which would establish the farmer succession pilot program within the Department of Agriculture.

Food security is a critical issue in Hawai'i, where one in six residents lacks comprehensive access to healthy, nutritious food. The pandemic amplified the need for Hawai'i to strengthen our local food systems and agricultural sector. For the past several years, the Hawai'i Foodbank has increased our purchasing from farmers, co-ops, and food hubs – these local producers are essential to distributing fresh, healthy food across our communities.

The Hawai'i gathers donated, rescued, and purchased food and distribute it to those in need through our network of more than 200 agency partners. Availability of fresh, locally grown food is an important aspect of our anti-hunger work, and we support this effort to provide support for farmers and create pathways to farming as a viable living.

Mahalo for your consideration.

With aloha,

Amy Miller Marvin
President and CEO, Hawaii Foodbank



MAUI COUNTY FARM BUREAU

PO Box 148, Kula, HI 96790
mauicountyfarmbureau.org

TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

February 1, 2023

1:00 PM

Conference Room 224

SB 520

RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Maui County Farm Bureau (MCFB) appreciates this opportunity to testify on this important issue. MCFB is a general agriculture advocacy organization representing farm and ranch families and organizations on the island of Maui.

MCFB strongly supports SB520 providing a means to address the need for succession on our long term commercial farms and ranches.

Hawaii is at a critical time in agriculture. Many multigenerational commercial farming and ranch operations face closure due to lack of successors. At the same time, there are programs focused on new farmers and ranchers without land or capital needs for a commercial operation..

Agricultural statistics speak to the aging of Hawaii's farmers and ranchers. A comprehensive program is needed to address this matter including the University, Counties and organizations such as USDA that have programs to assist in this matter.

MCFB respectfully requests your strong support of SB520 in the interest of supporting Hawaii's future in agricultural production.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our opinion on this matter. Please contact Warren Watanabe at 8082819716 if there are any questions.

SB-520

Submitted on: 1/30/2023 5:58:36 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Saleh Azizi Fardkhales	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear AEN Committee, I hope this finds you well.

My name is Saleh Azizi Fardkhales. In 2019, I completed my dissertation on community-led policies to promote food hubs and local farmers via the department of Urban and Regional Planning at UH Manoa.

For years, I have been hearing from like-minded advocates in the food system that we need to strengthen our supports that create more farmers including strengthening the pathway for people who have worked as volunteers, interns, apprentices and farm workers. The biggest problem with food security is not that we import 90% of the food we eat, that is in my view only a consequence of the problem. The real problem is that we do not listen our communities. When I began working with the food hubs, I spent time engaged in deep listening and learning from food hub owners and the farmers they serve.

Based on my experience with Kahumana Food Hub & Organic Farms and stories shared by MA'O Organic Farms, I can confirm that what many of our prospective farmers need is a bill that provides support services for folks who have decided to be farmers and need to find land, resources, establish business plans, seek financial support etc. If we do not offer these services, prospective farmers may move to places outside of Hawai'i where these support services are already exist. I am thrilled to see that such a bill has been offered through this measure of SB520. **I strongly support this bill.**

From the bill language, the farm succession pilot program shall -

- (1) Encourage matchmaking between incoming and outgoing farmers to ensure succession of agricultural lands and productive resources;
- (2) Encourage matchmaking between recently trained farmers and available jobs in agriculture and food systems;
- (3) Provide technical assistance and coordination to assist prospective farmers with access to land, finance, counseling, business planning and management, and grant writing;

(4) Continue and fund programs that provide education and training to beginning farmers and ranchers, including agricultural rehabilitation and vocational training programs; and

(5) Advancement of land partnerships such as farm incubator programs and educational programs on commercial farms that teach agricultural and business skills.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify

Kind Regards

Saleh Azizi Fardkhales, PhD

Food Systems Advocate



Food+ Policy Internship 2023

food@purplemaia.org

LATE

January 31, 2023

To: Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and the Senate] Committee on Agriculture & Environment

Subject: **SB 520, Relating to Agriculture**

Aloha Hawai'i State Legislators,

Local agricultural producers are indispensable elements of Hawai'i's local food system and economy. The average age of a farmer in Hawai'i is sixty years old, a number that has been rising over time. We stand in full **support of SB 520** because the future of Hawai'i's food security depends on the state's ability to encourage a new generation of farmers, accompanied by adequate educational, and financial resources. Many challenges exist for Hawai'i growers such as the decreasing trend in dollar value of agricultural products combined with the arguably high cost of farm inputs. The pilot program and farmer apprentice mentorship program can assist aspiring young farmers in overcoming these challenges and reaching their full potential as leaders in the agricultural community. It is important to have programs that embrace not only the knowledge and skills of Hawai'i's older generation of growers, but also ones that educate about market opportunities, local food purchasing, value-added products, and more. We stand in full support for SB 520 because it would inspire more dedicated stewards of our 'āina, while ultimately helping to improve food and nutrition security in Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Tierra Bartolotti & the Food+ Policy Team

#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2023, the cohort of interns are undergraduate 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.