

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



JAMES J. NAKATANI
Executive Director

STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

235 S. Beretania Street, Room 205
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TESTIMONY OF JAMES J. NAKATANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND
ENVIRONMENT

Wednesday, April 5, 2023
1:00 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

**GM 583 - Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of
Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation, Gubernatorial
Nominee, JASON OKUHAMA, for a term to expire 06-30-2023**

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and Members of the Committee:

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (“ADC”) **supports** GM 583, relating to the consideration and confirmation of Mr. Jason Okuhama’s appointment to the ADC Board of Directors.

Mr. Okuhama has a background in finance specializing in the USDA Rural Development, U.S. Small Business Administration, and USDA Farm Service Agency loan programs, as well as commercial real estate and residential financing.

ADC believes Mr. Okuhama’s finance experience will be instrumental in helping keep Hawaii’s agriculture industry moving forward. Furthermore, ADC is

confident he has the experience and skills required to serve on the Board and respectfully ask for your consideration and support of his nomination

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.



April 3, 2023

To: Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Tim Richards, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Regarding: Gubernatorial Nominee Jason T. Okuhama, submitted for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to provide this testimony in support of GM583 and GM584, the confirmation of Jason T. Okuhama to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

I serve as CEO of Farm Link Hawai'i, where we work with over 170 Hawai'i farmers, ranchers, and food makers, to serve more than 1,000 O'ahu customers with over 500 local products. In this role I recently had the opportunity to interact directly with Mr. Okuhama when exploring the possibility for securing a USDA Rural Development loan guarantee. Throughout the process I found him to be knowledgeable, thorough, and thoughtful. I have also observed Mr. Okuhama at work with colleagues in Hawai'i's agricultural industry, and have heard their universal appreciation for his professionalism and partnership.

It is widely acknowledged that the Agribusiness Development Corporation has struggled to successfully execute its mandate to "facilitate the transition of agricultural infrastructure from plantation operations to other agricultural enterprises" (Act 264). As reference, see the separate [State Audit](#) and [UHERO](#) reports, dated January 2021. In light of these difficulties, and the resulting lack of public faith in the ADC, it is more critical than ever that the ADC Board be composed of highly qualified and respected individuals.

I highly recommend Jason Okuhama for this role and believe that he will be a tremendous asset to the Board and our agricultural community. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CS", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Claire Sullivan, CEO
Farm Link Hawai'i
Phone: (808) 218-0077
Email: claire@farmlinkhawaii.com



Email: communications@ulupono.com

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT
Wednesday, April 5, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Ulupono Initiative strongly supports GM 583-GM 584, Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation, Gubernatorial Nominee, Jason Okuhama, for a Term to Expire 6-30-2027.

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 strongly supports GM 583-GM 584, which submits for consideration and confirmation Jason Okuhama to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

Jason Okuhama has the experience and expertise needed by the ADC to seek out commercial, federal, and state funding for projects that are important to Hawai'i's agricultural industry. Ulupono considers Mr. Okuhama as one of the most knowledgeable people in Hawai'i when it comes to creative financing that combines capital from both traditional banks and government programs. Over his career, he has secured tens of millions of dollars in federal and commercial financing for small Hawai'i food producers including Ho Farms, Oko'a Farms, Ho'omau Ranch, Zhao's Produce, and Bibo Farm, as well as larger clients in the macadamia nut, food processing, nursery, and orchard sectors. These financing transactions often include funding from multiple federal government programs and multiple commercial lenders. As Hawai'i seeks to increase local food production, we need capable and experienced professionals who have real-world experience in financing and seeing projects through to completion.

Ulupono humbly asks this committee and the Legislature for their support of the nomination of Jason Okuhama to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i



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April 5, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON GM 583

Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation, Gubernatorial Nominee, JASON OKUHAMA, for a term to expire 06-30-2023

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, 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 strongly supports the confirmation of Jason Okuhama to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

Mr. Okuhama's diverse background and experience in finance and agriculture lending would be invaluable to ADC as they continue to partner with farmers, ranchers, and aquaculture groups to optimize the use of selected high-value lands, water systems, and infrastructure for commercial agricultural use for the economic, environmental, and social benefit of the people of Hawaii.

Mr. Okuhama's experience will undoubtedly provide positive leadership for the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

HFB respectfully requests your strong support of Mr. Okuhama's confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

LARRY JEFTS FARMS, LLC
PO BOX 27
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(808) 688-2892

GM583 and GM584, Jason Okuhama
Gubernatorial Nominee to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC)

Senate AEN Hearing – 1:00 pm
Room 224
Wednesday, April 5, 2023

Testimony By: Larry Jeffs
Position: Support

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Senate AEN Committee:

I am Larry Jeffs, owner and operator of Larry Jeffs Farms, LLC. We have more than 42 years of Hawaii farm experience on Molokai and Oahu. Our family farms grow about 1 million pounds weekly of import replacement produce. I am a volunteer director and chair of the West Oahu Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). I have been an officer of the Hawaii Farm Bureau for many years.

ADC's purpose, established by HRS163-D, is to provide leadership for developing, financing, improving, or enhancing agribusiness enterprises to increase local production for local consumption and reduce reliance on imported agricultural products. One of ADC's challenges is conserving and converting arable lands and their associated infrastructure to new production uses.

Jason Okuhama's professional experience with financial management loan programs, particularly agricultural financing programs like the USDA Farm Service Agency, Farm Mac agricultural loan programs, and the USDA Rural Development, are an asset to ADC. In various business loan officer positions, he has worked with communities in Hawaii/Guam/American Samoa/CNMI, including Molokai. These experiences enhance ADC's capacity to meet its objectives.

Your favorable consideration of Mr. Okuhama's nomination to the ADC Board of Directors is appreciated. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Email: nmilne@kohalacenter.org

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Wednesday, April 5, 2023 – 1:10 p.m. – Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

Nicole Milne, personal testimony, in support of GM583, Gubernatorial Nominee, Jason Okuhama, for confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide personal testimony in **strong support** of GM583, the confirmation of Jason T. Okuhama to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

My name is Nicole Milne and I am the Vice President of Food and Agriculture Initiatives at The Kohala Center (TKC) and Member of the Board of Hawai‘i Good Food Alliance (HGFA). These entities are non-profit, statewide organizations that are community-based, working to support the development and resilience of economically viable agricultural and food operations *alongside* increased access to local food for Hawai‘i residents.

For the last 11 years I have worked with Hawai‘i’s farmers and ranchers as a technical assistance provider. In this role I have come to rely on the expertise of an extended network of professionals to address the myriad of needs facing Hawai‘i’s farmers and ranchers. There are several individuals that TKC’s staff turn to almost on a weekly basis – Jason Okuhama is one of those people. For years we have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Okuhama to bring financing options to Hawai‘i agricultural producers. Mr. Okuhama’s expertise in agricultural financing is exceptional, and his knowledge of the various government guarantee programs has allowed him to leverage public programs to make dreams come true for our islands’ farmers and ranchers. Moreover, as the Managing Director of First Financial Bank’s Farm and Ranch Division, located in Louisville, Kentucky, he is knowledgeable of and can provide access to lending capital beyond Hawai‘i’s shores.

Recently I have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Okuhama through two networks of professionals dedicated to collaboratively elevating Hawai‘i’s agribusiness landscape, the Agricultural Finance Hui and Hawai‘i Investment Ready’s Food System Funder Cohort. These groups are providing a venue for Hawai‘i’s farm and food capital providers (e.g., government lenders/grantors, foundations, nonprofit credit providers, etc.) to come together to build relationships, better understand financial products available to Hawai‘i’s producers, and engage in collaborative or participatory grant and loan processes for shared clients. In these engagements with Mr. Okuhama I have always found him to be open to collaboration, honest, diligent, and deeply dedicated to his profession and the success of Hawai‘i’s producers.

It is with great pleasure and excitement that I share this testimony. I wholeheartedly recommend Mr. Jason Okuhama and believe that he will be a tremendous asset to ADC’s Board.

I respectfully request your support of GM583. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Milne', written in a cursive style.

Nicole Milne
Vice President, The Kohala Center
Board Director, Hawai'i Good Food Alliance
Personal Testimony

April 3, 2023

SENATE COMMITTEE ON

AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

GM583 & 584 GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE JASON t. OKUHAMA SUBMITTED FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

TESTIMONY OF DEAN j. OKIMOTO

TO: CHAIR MIKE GABBARD, VICE CHAIR TIM RICHARDS, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

It is my pleasure to submit a letter of strong support of GM583, the nomination and confirmation of Jason T. Okuhama to the Board of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

I am the owner of Nalo Farms and had direct dealings with Jason as he is the local managing director of First Financial Bank's Farm and Ranch Division located in Louisville, Kentucky. The bank provided my farm operation, at the time, a loan which provided me with the opportunity to expand my business as well as help with operational expenses. I had the pleasure of working with Jason on paying the loan and being able to understand the plight and perils of agriculture in Hawaii. Having a local person with knowledge of the agricultural landscape of Hawaii and the culture of it's people, makes the experience so much more fruitful and less painful in paying a loan off. I have always found Jason to be honest, dedicated, professional, diligent and honorable.

I have personally seen Jason interact with a broad range of individuals over multiple occasions and have always found him to be professional, while putting others at ease, even when he is delivering unpleasant news.

I highly recommend Mr. Jason Okuhama and believe he will be a tremendous asset to the Board. Thank you for the opportunity to submit my comments.

Mahalo,

Dean J. Okimoto

Individually

