

**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**  
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**MARCH 17, 2023  
1:05 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 971, HOUSE DRAFT 2  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL LOANS**

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 971, HD2. This bill creates a revolving fund that will be dedicated to funding agricultural emergency loans. The emergency loan program serves as a safety net to farms during times of emergency and the Department strongly supports this bill.

Climate change and economic disasters are occurring with greater frequency creating much hardship to already struggling farm and ranch operations throughout the State. Ordinarily, on an annual basis, the funds available in the agricultural loan revolving loan fund are barely sufficient to meet the demands for loans to farmers who have not been able to obtain financial assistance from other sources and meet the Department's eligibility criteria. Due to the tight funding supply the program has not been able to reserve any funds specifically for emergency loans. Fortunately, in the last Legislative Session, the Legislature generously provided a one-time appropriation of \$1,500,000 for emergency loans to assist farmers and ranchers in the county of Maui adversely affected by drought and axis deer. However, natural disasters, production and pest blights and economic disasters are occurring on a more frequent basis with climate change and other factors and the Department's ability to respond with financial assistance in a timely manner is severely limited due to lack of a dedicated and readily available



emergency loan funding source. The Department's inability to assist farmers and ranchers damaged by such calamities in a timely manner was exacerbated by the recent elimination of the Department's access to Barrel tax revenues which were used to provide relief from the impacts of the pandemic through small emergency grants. Having a dedicated source of funding for agricultural emergencies will ensure that funding is available when it is needed ensuring a safety net for farms and ranches to ensure their survival during unforeseen emergencies which are expected to occur on a more frequent and more severe basis.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.**

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

**HB971 HD1**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Friday, March 17, 2023, 1:05 PM  
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

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

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county level Cattlemen's Associations. Our member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of over 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB971 HD1** which establishes a program specialist position within the Department of Agriculture and appropriates moneys to fund the position and prioritizes assistance for farmers and ranchers who produce local food that is at least partially consumed within the State.

Funding a position within the Department of Agriculture to assist ranchers and farmers to secure funding is important to ensuring access to capital for operations to succeed. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council supports all forms of agriculture and would like to point out that the opportunity to export goods helps many operations stay economically viable as a business. Every rancher in Hawaii contributes to local food whether it's through a grass-finished branded program or through cull cows and bulls that contribute to the local ground beef supply. Exporting goods is a smart way to diversify operations especially in times of drought. However, we support this measure which gives priority to those who produce local food.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Nicole Galase  
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council  
Managing Director





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SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT  
Friday, March 17, 2023 — 1:05 p.m.

**Ulupono Initiative supports HB 971 HD2, Relating to Agricultural Loans.**

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 HB 971 HD2**, which establishes the Agricultural Emergency Loan Revolving Fund, to be administered by the Department of Agriculture, to fund Class D emergency loans, and provides a separate source of funding for agricultural emergency loans.

Ulupono believes that the Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Loan Division provides critical support to the state's farmers and ranchers and helps advance Hawai'i's food production goals. Its programs include connecting local farmers and ranchers with capital for costs such as land and water resources, farm inputs, equipment and infrastructure, emergency response, marketing, technology, and much more.

The division's Agricultural Loan Program's revolving fund has been depleted due to the agricultural community's struggles to stay afloat after recent natural disasters, weather events, and the pandemic's economic fallout. Emergency needs tend to vary, depending on the circumstance. Having a dedicated emergency loan fund is important to address immediate needs in each instance and benefits local farmers and ranchers seeking to support the state with local products in times of disaster.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata  
Director of Government Affairs

*Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i*



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March 17, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**TESTIMONY ON HB 971, HD2**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL LOANS

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
1:05 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 supports HB 971, HD2**, which establishes the agricultural emergency loan revolving fund, to be administered by the Department of Agriculture, to fund Class D emergency loans, and provides a separate source of funding for agricultural emergency loans.

Hawai'i farmers and ranchers have and will continually have their operations impacted by natural disasters, global epidemics, pests, diseases, high winds, thunderstorms, hurricanes, fires, floods, earthquakes, lava flow, vog or other volcanic activity, droughts, and tidal waves. Supply chain issues and other shipping disruptions are also challenging for agricultural producers. These unexpected disasters can result in devastating economic damage and emergency financial assistance is critical to help our farmers and ranchers recover from production and physical losses.

An Agricultural Emergency Loan Revolving Fund that offers emergency loans would enable HDOA to quickly respond to agricultural emergencies by assisting farmers and ranchers with funding to help repair damaged infrastructure, replant crops, or replace equipment and supplies allowing them to continue farming or ranching.

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

**HB-971-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 3:56:33 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/17/2023 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dana Keawe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support