

Testimony of the Hawaii Harbor Users Group
Opposition to SCR24 and SR19
Before the Committee on Agriculture and Environment
March 29, 2023

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

The Hawaii Harbor Users Group (HHUG) is a non-profit maritime transportation industry group comprised of key commercial harbor users statewide. HHUG strongly opposes SCR24 and SR19.

Any legislation addressing shipping costs to export agricultural products is extremely premature. To date, the agricultural industry has never approached the maritime shipping industry regarding costs to export product. Respectfully, we submit that serious reconsideration should be given to going to the unnecessarily extensive lengths of urging Congress for an exemption to the U.S. Constitution when these two industries have never met with each other to discuss this perceived issue.

As an island state, Hawaii is very dependent upon our commercial harbors to ensure the continued and unimpeded flow of cargo in and out of our State. It is estimated that over 90 percent Hawaii's imported goods pass through our commercial harbors, including consumer goods, motor vehicles, construction materials, and fuel. Given the critical role of our commercial harbors, it is imperative that the State support dependable and efficient cargo transportation and handling to service our residents and businesses.

The Merchant Marine Act of 1920 is a vital lifeline for Hawaii and the United States. It ensures Hawaii receives reliable shipping service, provides family wage jobs for thousands of Hawaii workers, and provides an essential national security asset for our State. At least 91 nations have similar laws to protect the stability of its shipping industry and national security. The Merchant Marine Act of 1920 is not a factor in creating an almost insurmountable hurdle for agricultural producers and in fact ensures that local agricultural products can be transported within the State and to the continental United States reliably and timely.

Thank you for considering our testimony.