



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 3:01 p.m.

By

Anna Wieczorek, Interim Dean  
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

And

Michael Bruno, Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

#### SB 2060 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2060 to establish a permanent educational support associate position within the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), to provide support to the coffee and orchard crops extension and applied research program at the Kona Research Station.

The coffee industry is the third highest valued agricultural commodity of Hawai'i. Coffee is grown on 7,100 acres, has a farm gate value worth approximately \$60,000,000 and green coffee value of about \$113,000,000. With the state's first detection of the Coffee Berry Borer in 2010, and with the arrival of Coffee Leaf Rust in 2020, this important crop faces serious threats to its existence. CTAHR Cooperative Extension, in partnership with the Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center, Hawai'i Agriculture Research Center, Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, Synergistic Hawai'i Agriculture Council, and numerous coffee grower associations, has helped develop and share integrated pest management practices to the coffee growers of Hawai'i.

The estimated annual economic benefit to Hawai'i coffee growers because of the implementation of integrated pest management practices recommended by CTAHR Cooperative Extension is valued at \$33,000,000 per year.

In order to extend the reach of the one Extension agent in Hawai'i whose primary duties are focused on coffee and orchard crop production, this bill provides funding for one full-time equivalent permanent educational support position to assist the Extension agent working out of the Kona Research Station. This action would significantly amplify the positive effects of this Extension educational effort to support the Hawai'i coffee industry.

We support this bill, as it will have a significant positive economic impact for the coffee growers of Hawai'i provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents Approved Budget. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the measure.



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February 13, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**TESTIMONY ON SB 2060**  
RELATING TO THE AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
3:01 PM

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice-Chair Kidani, 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 2060**, which establishes an Educational Support Associate position within the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources' Kona Cooperative Extension.

The excellent work performed by UH CTAHR for Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers cannot be overstated. The ongoing outreach and education are unparalleled in the State. Farmers and ranchers rely on this program for their success. CTAHR has helped develop and improve agricultural technologies pertinent to Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers. This includes intensive cover crop research, promoting the importance of locally grown produce, developing biological and cultural methods for controlling pests without chemicals, and the use of biological nitrogen fixation to significantly increase the production of high protein foods while at the same time reducing the need for commercially produced fertilizers.

An Educational Support Associate will provide support to CTAHR's Kona Extension Faculty who provide support for farmers and ranchers that produce coffee, macadamia nut, avocado, and other tropical fruits, and livestock as well as assisting with coffee leaf rust and coffee berry borer, two-lined spittlebug, tree pruning, grafting, and propagation, organic and conventional pesticides, and nematode management.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important subject.



# Food+ Policy Internship 2024

[food@purplemaia.org](mailto:food@purplemaia.org)

**LATE**

February 13, 2024

Subject: *SB2060 - Relating to Agriculture*

Aloha Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle Kidani, and the Senate Committee of Higher Education

We are writing to express **strong support** from Hawai'i Food+ Policy for the enactment of **SB 2060** establishing a permanent educational support associate position within the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR).

The establishment of a permanent educational support associate position within CTAHR's cooperative extension program will provide essential assistance to our agricultural community, particularly in the face of threats such as the coffee berry borer and coffee leaf rust.

By establishing this position, we can ensure that extension faculty receive the support they need to address the needs and challenges of our agricultural industries. The coffee industry plays a vital role in Hawai'i's economy, representing the state's third-highest valued agricultural commodity. However, coffee farmers are currently facing significant challenges, and the support provided by CTAHR's Kona cooperative extension is essential for their continued success.

Furthermore, this bill will enable the prioritization of research and community outreach projects throughout the state, supporting not only the coffee industry but also other vital sectors such as macadamia, avocado, and temperate fruit and nut production. This investment in our agricultural infrastructure will help to safeguard our food security and support the stewardship of our natural resources for future generations.

Hawai'i Food+ Policy urges you to support this bill and take action to establish a permanent educational support associate position within CTAHR. We urge the committee to give favorable consideration to SB 2060 and to take decisive action to protect our native environment and agricultural stability. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify, and we stand ready to support the implementation of this critical legislation.

Mahalo,  
Janine Mariano & Hawaii Food+ Policy Team  
#fixourfoodsystem

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**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 2024, the cohort of interns are undergrads 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.



**LATE**

**IN SUPPORT OF SB2060**

RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

UH; CTAHR; Position; Establishment, Kona Cooperative Extension; Expenditure Ceiling; Appropriation (\$)

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

The Synergistic Hawai'i Agriculture Council (SHAC) stands in support of this Bill. Our consortium represents 1,500 agribusinesses, from growers to processors and shippers, stretching across the State. SHAC coordinates research and marketing grants on behalf of 100% Hawaiian origin products, including coffee, papaya, floriculture and macadamia nuts.

**Our current single Orchard Extension staff is not adequate when considering the \$130 million valuation of the crops they cover.** Coffee, macadamias and orchard crops could all sustain their own Extension agent, yet all crops are combined into one staff position. Additional staff are desperately needed so that growers can maintain access to vital information. A Support Associate will greatly benefit growers and their crop's health.

Thank you for considering this bill. Your attention makes a difference in the lives of hundreds of farmers.

Mahalo nui loa for supporting this bill!

Suzanne Shriner  
Administrator

**SB-2060**

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 2:57:10 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/13/2024 3:01:00 PM

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

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB NO.2060

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express strong support from for the enactment of S.B. NO.2060 establishing a permanent educational support associate position within the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR).

The establishment of a permanent educational support associate position within CTAHR's cooperative extension program will provide essential assistance to our agricultural community, particularly in the face of threats such as the coffee berry borer and coffee leaf rust.

By establishing this position, I can ensure that extension faculty receive the support they need to address the needs and challenges of our agricultural industries. The coffee industry plays a vital role in Hawai'i's economy, representing the state's third-highest valued agricultural commodity. However, coffee farmers are currently facing significant challenges, and the support provided by CTAHR's Kona cooperative extension is essential for their continued success.

Furthermore, this bill will enable the prioritization of research and community outreach projects throughout the state, supporting not only the coffee industry but also other vital sectors such as macadamia, avocado, and temperate fruit and nut production. This investment in our agricultural infrastructure will help to safeguard our food security and support the stewardship of our natural resources for future generations.

I urge you to support this bill and take action to establish a permanent educational support associate position within CTAHR. I urge the committee to give favorable consideration to S.B. NO.2060 and to take decisive action to protect our native environment and agricultural stability. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify, and I stand ready to support the implementation of this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Merideth Welch



**LATE**

February 12, 2024

Re: Senate Bill 2060 – Relating to Agriculture

Dear Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

My name is Andrea Kawabata and I am providing testimony as an individual only. I currently work as a county extension agent for the University of Hawaii at Manoa's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources and my office is located in the heart of coffee country at the Kona Research and Extension Center in Kealahou. My clientele are statewide coffee producers and orchard crop growers in West Hawaii which includes growers of macadamia nut and tropical fruit. As such, I am acutely aware of the need for administrative, professional, and technical (APT) staffing referred to by SB2060. I lend my strong support for SB2060, which if funded, would provide much needed assistance to the Kona Research Station and to the Coffee and Orchard Crop Extension Program that I coordinate.

I have been an extension agent for almost 13 years and serve producers of Hawaii's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> highest valued (2023) agricultural commodities. Further, my program provides outreach to the greatest number of clientele of all agricultural agents. Since beginning this position, my program has been inundated with major needs by these industries because of the introduction of pests such as the coffee berry borer, coffee leaf rust, macadamia felted coccid, macadamia quick decline, little fire ant, Queensland longhorn beetle, and avocado lace bug. For nearly 11 years, I have partnered with other organizations, associations, and individuals, and have helped our agricultural industries tackle and survive these major threats by successfully acquiring grant funding for research, outreach, and an APT position (and at times a Jr. Ext Agent as well). So far, my program's APT staffing has been at the mercy of grant funding. It is a vicious cycle of devoting time to apply for grants instead of spending that time to provide outreach to industry. If successful, a grant-funded staff is hired but he/she is hired to assist in the completion of grant objectives and not what the industry may need otherwise. Then, in order to keep staff without having to retrain, I need to constantly chase grant funds, which again, takes away from providing other outreach needed by the coffee and orchard crop industries.

A few years ago, I was asked by industry what I needed help with. To be honest, it's difficult to say "yes, I need help", but with so many new devastating pests, there was no doubt that I needed it. I know how important staffing is to my program and that is what I shared with them. I needed help to enhance communications with producers, populate websites and newsletters, man educational booth displays, host workshops, field days, and webinars, and maintain field plots at the Kona Research Station for field day demonstrations, applied-research projects, and germplasm. Germplasm preservation may not seem like much, but it is because of past researchers and staff maintaining these collections, that we will be providing coffee leaf rust resistant plant materials to industry this year. NONE of this is possible without support staff.

I humbly ask for your support and funding of SB2060 because this APT position will provide much needed help to our top agricultural industries whose crops are fraught with debilitating pests, diseases, and other production, labor, and marketing issues.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me at [andreak@hawaii.edu](mailto:andreak@hawaii.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Andrea Kawabata  
Kona, Hawaii Resident



**LATE**

**SB-2060**

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 9:15:58 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/13/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Matthew Miyahira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice-Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Matthew Miyahira, I am a temporary, grant-funded Educational Support for the University of Hawai‘i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) Kona Cooperative Extension Service. I am writing to you in support of S.B. 2060 to establish an Educational Support Associate position within the University of Hawai‘i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources' Kona Cooperative Extension.

Establishing a permanent Educational Support position in Kona’s Cooperative Extension would support two of the state’s most valuable agricultural industries, coffee and macadamia nuts, that are dealing with pests and diseases like coffee leaf rust (CLR), coffee berry borer (CBB), and macadamia quick decline (MQD). It would also benefit Kona’s tropical fruit and nut growers with crops like avocado, mango, and cacao, who are all battling invasive pests and diseases of their own.

The agricultural extension program in Kona provides farmers and ranchers with the knowledge to manage these pests using integrated pest management systems, which use good agricultural practices like effective pruning methods, using pest-resistant plant varieties, and increasing general plant health to minimize the need for pesticide applications.

The extension program also offers pesticide safety education, providing federal worker protection standard training (WPS), respirator use training events with medical clearances and respirator fit-testing available, and sprayer calibration events to educate farm managers and farm workers to keep themselves, their crops, and the environment safe when using pesticides.

Support for S.B. 2060 and CTAHR’s Kona Cooperative Extension is an investment in not only the state’s coffee and fruit growing industries, but the health and well being of Hawai‘i’s agricultural community.

Mahalo,

Matthew Miyahira



**LATE**

**SB-2060**

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 9:46:02 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/13/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
DOUGLAS DREW	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support SB2060

As a coffee and fruits/nuts producer on Maui we face limitations in access to UH Cooperative Extension personnel except via telcon, newsletters and online searches and at conferences such as the HCA annual conference where we get to meet personnel. Field visits from personnel to Maui are seldom and brief with staffing always the binding constraint. and, in fairness to staff they are dealing with a cornucopia of crops in this tropical environment spread over the islands.

And almost every year we are confronted with yet anotehr biotic or abiotic stress requiring expert opinion.

Access to the continuum of knowledge is critical on our path to being more food secure in Hawaii plus generating export earnings.

Aloha

**LATE**

**SB-2060**

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 6:30:59 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/13/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gary Yamagata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Gary Yamagata and I am a 4th generation Kona coffee farmer. I am in support of bill SB2060.

Thank you,

Gary Yamagata

**LATE**

**SB-2060**

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 8:22:45 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/13/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John Koontz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! and thank you for considering this addition to CTAHR. As I'm sure you're aware, the agriculture on the Big Island, and especially the coffee industry, has taken several blows in the last few years. In order to preserve the industry, I think that it's imperative to provide assistance and iup-to-date nformation to the farmers. CTAHR has always been the hub from which current information has been distributed. They have been overwhelmed and another position there would benefit everyone. Mahalo, John Koontz, Konaloha Farms.

**LATE**

**SB-2060**

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 12:00:10 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/13/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jose Miranda Ledezma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Position urgent need it in the Coffee Industry

**SB-2060**

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 1:26:16 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/13/2024 3:01:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolyn Witcover	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a coffee farmer in Kona. The estimated annual economic benefit to Hawai'i coffee growers because of the implementation of integrated pest management practices recommended by CTAHR Cooperative Extension is valued at \$33,000,000 per year. In order to extend the reach of the one Extension agent in Hawai'i whose primary duties are focused on coffee and orchard crop production, this bill provides funding for one fulltime equivalent permanent educational support position to assist the Extension agent working out of the Kona Research Station. This action would significantly amplify the positive effects of this Extension educational effort to support the Hawai'i coffee industry.

**LATE**

**SB-2060**

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 1:30:12 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/13/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chris Speere	Testifying for Maui Coffee Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support 2060 SB RELATING TO AGRICULTURE. The coffee industry is vital to a robust and sustainable Agricultural future for Hawaii. Dedicated expertise to support the Hawaii coffee industry will increase the viability of coffee as a commercial specialty crop that adds value to Hawaii's economy and GDP.

Given the challenges with global warming, drought, CBB and coffee leaf rust across all coffee growing regions, Hawaii will require the expertise and the support proposed in this measure to remain a key player and leading brand in the global coffee market.