

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEXTER KISHIDA
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

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024
1:31 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 224 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE BILL NO. 3261
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 3261. This bill establishes a local agriculture transportation cost reimbursement program to reimburse eligible ranchers and farmers a portion of their costs to transport livestock, agricultural commodities, and certain supplies under certain circumstances.

The Department strongly supports this measure with the following comments. Given that Hawaii is an island state, any increase in cost of interisland transportation can serve as a barrier to market access for many local agricultural producers. When an interisland cargo carrier raised its shipping rates by 46 percent in 2020, many agricultural producers, particularly those on neighbor islands could no longer afford to ship their products to other islands, resulting in lost sales and market share.

In a recent USDA-NASS/HDOA survey report on Hawaii Commercial Agricultural Expansion, it was identified that shipping and transportation costs were cited as a leading barrier by 39% of local ranchers and farmers when considering the expansion of their agricultural production.



In administering this proposed local agriculture transportation cost reimbursement program, we respectfully request the Legislature to appropriate and fund one FTE position to determine eligibility, process disbursement payments, maintain proper administrative records, and prepare required financial reports, in a timely manner.

Finally, the Department deeply appreciates current legislative efforts to assist eligible ranchers and farmers to remain accessible to affordable interisland shipping in Hawaii.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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TO: Committee on Agriculture and Environment

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 12, 2024
TIME: 1:31pm
PLACE: Room 224

RE: SB3261 Relating to Agriculture

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

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

Increasing local food production is an important goal for our state. We are all aware of the many challenges that our local food producers face, including the geographic obstacle of getting food from where it's grown to customers on other islands.

This measure would help offset the burden that food producers face when moving their goods interisland. This tax credit can help make locally grown food more competitive with imported products, more available and accessible to consumers or manufacturers on other islands, and incentivize more agricultural production.

For these reasons we ask the committee to pass this measure. 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

SB3261

RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Monday, February 12, 2024, 1:31 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

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

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports SB3261** which establishes a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program to reimburse eligible ranchers and farmers a portion of their costs to transport livestock, livestock products, agricultural commodities, and certain supplies under certain circumstances.

As an island state, transportation of cattle is a key component for Hawaii's ranchers. Over the past few years, the cost of transportation has continued to increase dramatically. Ranchers rely on interisland shipping to get cattle to available processing facilities and to viable markets. This program will be a welcome opportunity for producers to utilize, and will allow them the confidence to continue production or even expand it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. 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.

Nicole Galase
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Managing Director





Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

February 11, 2024

Subject: *SB 3261, Relating to Agriculture*

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

The Hawaii Food+ Policy Team is in support for Senate Bill 3261, which establishes a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program. This program aims to reimburse eligible ranchers and farmers a portion of their costs to transport livestock, livestock products, agricultural commodities, and certain supplies under specific circumstances.

We believe that supporting local agriculture is fundamental to building a resilient and sustainable food system. SB 3261 addresses a critical need by recognizing the challenges faced by ranchers and farmers in transporting their products, particularly in the unique geographic context of Hawaii.

The establishment of a Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program is a strategic initiative that not only alleviates financial burdens on local producers but also contributes to the overall growth and viability of our agriculture industry. By reimbursing a portion of transportation costs, the bill encourages local farmers and ranchers to continue their vital contributions to our food supply chain to get food on the plates of our local people.

In consideration of the vital role local agriculture plays in our state, we urge you to support and pass SB 3261. This bill represents a crucial step in promoting the economic viability of our local farmers and ranchers, ensuring the continued success of Hawaii's agriculture industry. The positive impact on our food security, economy, and overall well-being cannot be overstated. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hawaii Food+ Policy Team

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.