

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 16 2024

RE: S.B. No. 2961

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2024
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Agriculture and Environment, to which was referred S.B. No. 2961 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Require the Department of Agriculture to establish a two-year Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State; and
- (2) Require a report to the Legislature before the Regular Session of 2026.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Agribusiness Development Corporation, Hawai'i Farm Bureau, and Kanalani Ohana Farm.

Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Agriculture and Office of Planning and Sustainable Development.

Your Committee finds that the lack of agricultural workforce housing, especially in rural communities, is an overlooked and longstanding problem that inhibits the growth of Hawaii's



agricultural industry. According to testimony received by your Committee, farmworkers cope with a range of problems, including high costs that typically do not fit their incomes; substandard, crowding housing conditions; and the need for short-term housing during the planting and harvest seasons.

The Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group (Working Group) established in this measure can help identify the agricultural workforce housing needs in each county and the barriers to meeting the housing needs for farm and ranching businesses in the State. However, your Committee notes further recommendations made by the Department of Agriculture to:

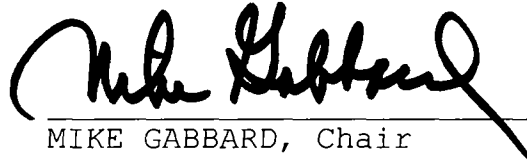
- (1) Require the Working Group to gather data and information and survey farm operators to assess the real demand for farm workers;
- (2) Appropriate funds for the Department of Agriculture to undertake data and information gathering, survey farm operators, administer to the needs of the Working Group, and hire consultants with the expertise in addressing agricultural workforce housing needs; and
- (3) Appropriate funds for Royal Kunia Agricultural Park capital improvement project as it will enhance the duties of the Working Group.

Your Committee respectfully requests that these recommendations be considered as this measure moves forward in the legislative process.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture and Environment that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2961 and recommends that it pass Second Reading and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Agriculture and
Environment,



MIKE GABBARD, Chair



The Senate
 Thirty-Second Legislature
 State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
Committee on Agriculture and Environment
AEN

Bill / Resolution No.:* SB 2961	Committee Referral: AEN, WAM	Date: 02-12-24
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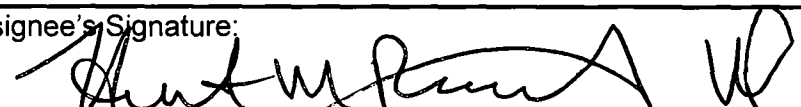
The Committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure.
 If so, then the previous decision was to: _____

The Recommendation is:

Pass, unamended 2312
 Pass, with amendments 2311
 Hold 2310
 Recommit 2313

Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
GABBARD, Mike (C)	X			
RICHARDS, III, Herbert M. "Tim" (VC)	X			
DECOITE, Lynn	X			
RHOADS, Karl	X			
AWA, Brenton	X			
TOTAL	5			

Recommendation: Adopted Not Adopted

Chair's or Designee's Signature: 

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***Only one measure per Record of Votes**