



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2024**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 2137, RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

DATE: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 **TIME:** 9:15 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 325 and Videoconference

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Travis T. Moon or Bryan C. Yee, Deputy Attorneys General

Chair Gates and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comment regarding this bill.

The bill proposes to establish the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program under the Department of Agriculture (DOA) for the purpose of funding food banks and emergency feeding organizations. The bill also creates the Hawaii Food Assistance Program Special Fund to be utilized by the DOA for the purposes of the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program.

Currently, the bill does not explain why the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program could not be implemented with general funds. Section 37-52.3, Hawaii Revised Statutes provides that the Legislature “shall ensure that the special fund: (1) [s]erves a need, as demonstrated by: . . . (C) [a]n explanation of why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process.” Thus, we recommend that this bill include an explanation of why the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program cannot be implemented successfully with general funds and must instead utilize the Hawaii Food Assistance Program Special Fund.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

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
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024
9:15 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

HOUSE BILL 2137
RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2137. This bill establishes the Hawaii farm to food bank program and Hawaii food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the state. The Department expresses our **strong support**.

Farm to Food bank programs are a win-win program, helping alleviate food insecurity in our communities, while opening additional markets to our farmers and ranchers. With a stable source of funding, food banks are a consistent customer for our farmers. The fragility of our food supply chains was made apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hawaii farmers rose up and continued to feed their communities.

In addition, Farm to Food bank programs make the amazing healthy fresh foods grown and raised in Hawaii available to everyone, not just those that can afford it. Due to the ability for food banks to change their inventory quickly, this program would allow the food banks to act as 'ballast', purchasing when there are unexpected abundance in the market.

One comment is the need to clarify the eligibility for the program. The suggestion is to strike emergency feeding organization as "food bank" has a clear definition.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



COUNTY COUNCIL

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Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

February 12, 2024

**TESTIMONY OF ADDISON BULOSAN
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON
HB 2137, RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM
AND
HB 2590, RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Wednesday, February 14, 2024
9:15 a.m.
Conference Room 325
Via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Gates and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2137, Relating to the Hawai'i Farm to Food Bank Program and HB 2590, Relating to Food Security. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council.

I wholeheartedly support the intent of HB 2137 and HB 2590, which would greatly affect the Kaua'i community.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2137 and HB 2590. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

ADDISON BULOSAN
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

AAO:slr



WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

February 14, 2023

Representative Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

RE: House Bill 2137 – RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM
Hearing date: February 14, 2023, 9:15 a.m.

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Young Brothers, LLC (“YB”) offering **SUPPORT** for House Bill 2137 – Relating to the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program.

YB is a common carrier by water, transporting property by tug and barge between the islands of O’ahu, Hawai’i, Kaua’i, Maui, Moloka’i, and Lāna’i. YB is currently the only water carrier authorized to transport property under Chapter 271G, Hawaii Revised Statutes (“HRS”) (i.e., the Hawaii Water Carrier Act), subject to the regulatory authority of the Public Utilities Commission of the State of Hawaii (“PUC”). Since 1900, customers across Hawaii have relied on YB’s frequent, regular, and universal sailings to serve as the bridge that connects all communities in this island-state.

This measure would establish the Hawaii farm to food bank program and Hawaii food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State and appropriate necessary funds.

Food security remains a critical issue in Hawaii. The Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program will help address these food security challenges while also investing in local agriculture. The Hawaii Foodbank’s Farm to Foodbank program, which was launched in March of 2020, has successfully provided healthy, locally-grown produce within communities across the state by working with partner agencies and organizations to distribute food to the community. This measure will support such efforts going forward.

For the reasons stated above, I offer **SUPPORT** for this measure.

Thank you for your service to the State of Hawaii, and for the opportunity to testify offering comments on this measure.

Sincerely,

Jay Ana
President



February 14, 2024

House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

RE: Testimony in support of HB 2137, Relating to the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program

Dear Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, I am writing in **strong support of HB 2137**, which seeks establish the Hawai'i farm to food bank program and Hawai'i food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State and appropriates funds for this purpose.

Food insecurity is a critical issue in Hawai'i, where one in six residents lacks comprehensive access to healthy, nutritious food. One in four children is food insecure. Hawai'i has the highest cost of living in the nation, and inflation has driven food prices up by more than 25% since before the pandemic—greatly exacerbating the problem and putting far too many families at risk of going hungry, or making impossible choices between food and rent, food and medicine, or food and transportation. Food insecure households are especially vulnerable to a natural disaster, as they do not have the capacity to set aside a fourteen-day supply of food and water.

The Farm to Food Bank program addresses these critical needs while investing in our local food systems at the same time. Every dollar in the Farm to Foodbank program does double duty—not only is it invested in local agriculture, supporting our local farmers, helping to buoy our local economy and food system, and decreasing our dependence on imported food, but it allows us to provide fresh, healthy, Hawai'i-grown produce and proteins to those we serve. We know that food insecurity is highly correlated with negative health outcomes such as diabetes and heart disease, and that as budgets grow tighter, households tend to shift towards less expensive food options—which are often highly processed and significantly less healthy. The ability to provide fresh produce to those we serve will have a long-term positive effect on the health of our entire community.

Hawai'i Foodbank established our Farm to Foodbank program during the pandemic through a partnership with the Hawai'i Farm Bureau, with a commitment to purchase locally produced foods from local farmers and ranchers when their regular markets shut down. For the first three years of the Farm to Foodbank program, Hawai'i Foodbank purchased and distributed more than seven million pounds of local produce and proteins, funded primarily through COVID-era federal pandemic relief funds. Since those funds have lapsed, we have continued to fund our Farm to Foodbank program through private philanthropic support and other sources, and are currently purchasing between 25,000 – 30,000 pounds of local produce per week, including culturally relevant products such as poi, 'uala, and 'ulu. HB2137 would allow us to continue and grow these important programs.



We do request clarification on eligibility to participate in the program as described in the bill. “Food bank” is defined, but “emergency feeding organization” is not; clarification here would be helpful.

Hawai'i Foodbank is Hawai'i's largest hunger relief organization, fiercely dedicated to our mission of nourishing our 'ohana today while working to end hunger tomorrow. We work with a network of more than 200 partner agencies across O'ahu and Kaua'i to provide food assistance to an average of more than 150,000 people each month.

Hawai'i Foodbank provides all food, including locally purchased produce, to our network of partner agencies free of charge, and our partner agencies then distribute that food into our communities directly. Last year, we distributed food for more than 16.2 million meals across the islands we directly serve, including nearly 5 million pounds of fresh produce. Together with the Maui Food Bank, serving Maui County, and The Food Basket, serving Hawai'i Island, our network of food banks and partner agencies provide food assistance to all those facing hunger across the State.

Mahalo for your consideration.

With aloha,

Amy Miller

President and CEO, Hawai'i Foodbank



**Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
Wednesday, February 14, 2024; 9:15 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2137 – RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM.

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** House Bill No. 2137, RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

This bill, as received by your Committee, would establish the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program (Program) to purchase, store, and transport fresh, locally-grown or produced food to food insecure communities. To accomplish this, this bill would also appropriate \$5,000,000 from the Hawaii Food Assistance Program Special Fund for fiscal year 2024-2025, for uses consistent with the Program.

The HPCA asserts that the COVID-19 pandemic severely threatened the health and welfare of our citizens, especially Hawaii's underprivileged and rural communities. Entire families continue to struggle to put food on the table on a consistent basis. Our overreliance on tourism has weakened our ability to bounce back from COVID's dire economic realities. The only way for us to protect ourselves from the next global pandemic is for Hawaii to diversify its economic base and become more self-sufficient. And for us to do that, we need to grow more food.

Accordingly, the HPCA urges your favorable consideration of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.



HIPHI Board

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Native Hawaiian Research Office

HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &
Evaluation

Community Health
Worker Initiatives

COVID-19 Response

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free
Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Hui

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce
Development

Date: February 12, 2024

To: Representative Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Re: HB 2137 Relating to the Hawai'i Farm to Food Bank Program

Hrg: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 9:15 AM

Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Instituteⁱ appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **Support of HB 2137**, which would establish and fund a farm to food bank program.

Consistent Demand

Farmers sometimes produce supply beyond market demand, which often goes to waste, or farmers under produce because there is not always consistent market demand. Currently, this excess would go to waste or people are unable to obtain local foods because there is not enough. However, with a robust farm to food bank program, the food bank system can be consistent purchasers of locally sourced food.ⁱⁱ This system provides a steady demand for the local farming community, ensuring an opportunity for them to have consistent buyers of their foods. By the foodbanks consistently purchasing foods at fair market values, it helps our local food market. It is integral that farmers have consistent buyers so they can produce to scale. There is constant demand for fresh produce from the food banks, but it is often unavailable. This program can help fill that void by providing healthier food choices for our residents.

Help the Local Economy

This program will help local farmers sell more food within the State. The food they will go to those most in need here in Hawai'i that depend on the food bank system. This investment will flow in all sectors of our economy as farmers and food distributors spend their earned money on other goods and services.

Sincerely,

Nate Hix

Social Impact Policy Manager
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

ⁱ The Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, formerly known as the Obesity Prevention Task Force, was created by the legislature in 2012 and is comprised of over 60 statewide organizations. The HEAL Coalition works to make recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and health care environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents.

ⁱⁱ <https://kauainownews.com/2022/02/14/hawaii-food-basket-receives-donation-from-kaiser-for-new-program/>

Wednesday, February 14, 2024; 9:15 am
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

To: Representative Cedric Gates, Chair
Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair

From: Michael Robinson
Vice President, Government Relations & Community Affairs

Re: **Testimony in Support of HB 2137
Relating To The Hawai'i Farm To Food Bank Program**

My name is Michael Robinson and I am the Vice President of Government Relations & Community Affairs at Hawai'i Pacific Health (HPH). Hawai'i Pacific Health is a not-for-profit health care system comprised of its four medical centers – Kapi'olani, Pali Momi, Straub and Wilcox and over 70 locations statewide with a mission of creating a healthier Hawai'i.

I write in support of HB 2137 which establishes the Hawai'i farm to food bank program and the Hawai'i food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the state.

HPH recognizes the strong connection between access to healthy foods with health and wellness. Adults who eat a healthy diet live longer and have a lower risk of obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. Healthy eating can help people with chronic diseases manage these conditions and avoid complications. However, many low income families continue to struggle to put food on the table. The Hawai'i farm to food bank program will serve the State's food needs, provide local food producers with a market to support their operations, and keep moneys circulating within the State to boost the local economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Senate Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports: HB2137

Wednesday, February 14th, 2024 9:15am, Conference Room 325

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa and Members of the Committees,

HAPA strongly supports HB2137, which establishes the Hawai'i farm to food bank program and Hawai'i food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.

This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai'i to local communities for distribution. This program will address rising hunger and food insecurity in Hawai'i¹² while providing local food producers with additional markets thus benefiting our economy and ag sector.

HAPA understands that in addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB2137 to help support our local food markets and help grow our local food economy while supporting local families in reducing hunger and obtaining quality food.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

1

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2023/12/28/report-food-insecurity-soared-hawaii-inflation-pushed-up-prices/>

2

<https://www.staradvertiser.com/2023/12/28/hawaii-news/food-insecurity-rises-in-hawaii-amid-increasing-costs/>



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director

Testimony of
Jonathan Ching
Government Relations Director

Before:
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
The Honorable Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
The Honorable Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair

February 14, 2024
9:15 a.m.
Conference Room 325 & Via Videoconference

Re: HB 2137, Relating to Hawai‘i Farm to Food Bank Program

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and committee members thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2137, which establishes the Hawai‘i farm to food bank program and Hawai‘i food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.

Kaiser Permanente Hawai‘i SUPPORTS HB 2137.

Kaiser Permanente is one of the nation’s largest not-for-profit health plans, serving 12.6 million members nationwide, and more than 274,000 members in Hawai‘i. In Hawai‘i, more than 4,200 dedicated employees and more than 650 Hawai‘i Permanente Medical Group physicians and advance practice providers work in our integrated health system to provide our members coordinated care and coverage. Kaiser Permanente Hawai‘i has more than 19 medical facilities, including our award-winning Moanalua Medical Center. We continue to provide high-quality coordinated care for our members and deliver on our commitment to improve the health of our members and the 1.4 million people living in the communities we serve.

Kaiser Permanente Hawai‘i supports policies that ensure all Hawai‘i residents have access to affordable, high-quality health care. Further, we support “whole-person care,” including providing access to services and resources that address beneficiaries’ physical, mental, and social needs.

Kaiser Permanente Hawai‘i prioritizes food security as an area of community health focus, meaning that all people, in all communities, have access to sufficient, affordable, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy lifestyle. However, we know that food insecurity has increased due to the effects of inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Kaiser Permanente Hawai‘i provides grants to Hawai‘i food banks administering The Emergency Food Assistance Program’s (TEFAP) Farm to Food Bank Program, which is critical for many families facing food insecurities.

The grant funds served a twofold purpose through the food purchasing program. First, the funds are used as a match to draw down Federal funds, which require a 1:1 match. Additionally, Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i's grant funds support farm-direct bags of fresh produce for low-income seniors receiving a monthly supplemental food box through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), a USDA program that Hawai'i Foodbank runs in partnership with the Office of Community Services.

Last year, these grant funds helped provide over 770,000 meals to kūpuna, keiki, and their families, including: purchasing 38,724 pounds of fresh produce directly from local farm partners, and distributing more than 7,000 farmers market vouchers and 24,000 food boxes.

We support HB 2137 because it will help to further the state's food needs, provide local food producers with a market to support their operations and keep money circulating within the State to boost the local economy.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Wednesday, February 14, 2024 — 9:15 a.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports HB 2137, Relating to the Hawai'i Farm to Food Bank Program.

Dear Chair Gates 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 2137, which establishes the Hawai'i Farm to Food Bank Program and Hawai'i Food Assistance Program Special Fund to alleviate food shortages in the state.

Over the last few years, one of the most pressing issues for many local families has been food insecurity. With many out of work and surviving on government unemployment support, communities have relied on the efforts of food banks and local food producers to meet their basic need to eat.

In response to the COVID pandemic, federal monies injected into Hawai'i through county initiatives helped grow a local farm-to-food bank effort, in which food banks were able to purchase local products for distribution to needy communities. This effort was a win-win-win, in that local food producers had a market to sell their products when hotels and restaurants shuttered their doors, local families received fresh and nutritious food products made locally island-wide, and food banks that were struggling to purchase shelf-stable food due to nationwide shortages were rescued by Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers who provided local food to their communities.

The Farm to Food Bank efforts across the state led to many important foundational relationships between local farmers, ranchers, and community feeding organizations that helped struggling communities cope with the social and economic consequences of the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, natural disasters, food supply chain disruptions, and state emergencies have become a harsh, consistent reality for our local communities. Food banks across the state will need support to meet these food security challenges, and continuing to strengthen the bonds between farms and food banks is a worthy investment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i



To: The House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems (AGR)
From: Sherry Pollack, Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Wednesday, February 14, 2024, 9:15 am

In strong support of HB2137

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and AGR Committee members;

I am Co-Founder of the Hawaii chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org **strongly supports HB2137** that establishes the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program and Hawaii Food Assistance Program Special Fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.

Many families in Hawaii struggle to put food on the table on a consistent basis, and the COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated this situation. This measure is a wonderful idea that supports our farmers and at the same time helps our local families in need by providing local, fresh, healthy options. Efforts to support our farmers also builds our resiliency and avoids the greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from shipping in food.

Please pass **HB2137** so that we all may reap these benefits.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of this important legislation.

Sherry Pollack
Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 14, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 2137
RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:15 AM

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice-Chair Kahaloa, 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 2137, which establishes the Hawai'i Farm to Food Bank Program and Hawai'i Food Assistance Program Special Fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.

The Coronavirus Pandemic disrupted Hawai'i's local food systems and caused many local producers to lose their local markets. Many catered to tourism, large-scale events, hotels, restaurants, cruise ships, farmers' markets, and school lunch programs, which were non-existent during Hawai'i's shutdown.

Like small businesses around the state, without open and consistent markets, local farmers and ranchers will decrease food production levels and will likely downsize and/or go out of business. To help address the state's food security during the pandemic, Hawai'i's Foodbanks partnered with local food producers to ensure that farmers and ranchers could survive.

At the onset of the pandemic, Hawai'i's Foodbanks partnered with farmers and ranchers to provide local agricultural produce and proteins for their food assistance programs. As organizations that aggregate and distribute food, Foodbank staff brought valuable logistical insight to these programs. The combined efforts of Hawai'i's Foodbanks, the Hawai'i Farm Bureau, and other partner organizations allowed tens of thousands of families to have access to food during unprecedented times. This win-win partnership connected local producers that lost markets and revenue sources due to COVID-19 with the Hawai'i Foodbank to meet the increased demands of feeding Hawai'i's communities.

A Hawai'i Farm to Food Bank Program with dedicated funding will provide funds to Hawai'i's food banks that support non-profit and community feeding programs by providing locally grown or produced foods to communities in need. This will also help Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers while also providing local nutritional food to those who need it most.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Environmental Caucus of
The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

Agriculture & Food Security Committee

Wednesday, February 14, 2024, 9:15 am

House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

HOUSE BILL 2137 – RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM

Position: Strong Support

Me ke Aloha, Chair Gates, Vice-Chair Kahaloa, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems:

SB2134 establishes a full time position of grant specialist to assist agriculturalists in qualifying for financial aid.

The Agriculture and Food Security Committee believes this is another key element in providing successful food systems, by supporting agricultural applicants to successfully navigate grants processes that may be complex and require precious time that farmers may not have the expertise for.

Our committee has worked with strategic partners across the community to arrive at the conclusion that food systems must be explored in order to derive a strategic plan to increase affordable fresh local produce food destined for local working family tables, alleviating our dependence on importing 85-90% of our food, increasing local food security and improving local nutrition.

We believe that Hawaii has too long emphasized export agriculture over local markets, in order to diversify the agricultural base and to produce revenues for the State, demonstrating agricultural productivity. Two casualties include degraded soils and nearshore waters, and affordable fresh local produce.

However, we are persuaded that, while export agriculture plays an important role in generating support for infrastructure, the hard truth is that it cannot compete sufficiently with other parts of the globe for market share, and that there is insufficient revenue from local markets to sustain enough food production for local tables. To be blunt, given the high costs and numerous hurdles to produce and deliver fresh local produce affordable to local families, "there's no profit" in growing food unless numerous disadvantages against marketers at scales of efficiency can be overcome. In our opinion, food security lies in a stronger public role in agricultural support, much as it does with education or bus service. In order for an efficient mix of these sectors to provide true food security, the roadblocks to available agricultural assistance requires professional assistance, and is in Hawaii's public interest.

We applaud the move to provide grant access assistance.

Mahalo for the opportunity to address this matter.

/s/ Charley Ice Acting Chair, Agriculture and Food Security Committee
Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party

Voice of God Ministries

Pastor Elizabeth L. Kekua
P.O. Box 860173
Wahiawa, Hawaii 96786
EIN# 80-0877885
Phone (808) 373-0294
Email: vogm08@gmail.com

February 12, 2024

Testimony in support of HB2137, Relating to food security

Aloha Chair gates, Vice Chair Kahaloo, and Committee Members:

I am testifying on behalf of Voice of God Ministries>

I support HB2590, which will appropriate funds for foodbank purchase from local farmers, to be expended by request for proposal via the Department of Agriculture.

Partnering with Hawaii Food Bank has not only helped us to bring food relief to the people of Hawaii but has enabled us to be able to assist people who are in need or just might need a little help to make it to the next month. Without this partnership, we would not be able to meet the demands or needs of the people. Once again, this would not be possible without your continued support. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Aloha,

Elizabeth Kekua (VOGM Pastor)



1809 Bachelot Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

LATE

February 12, 2024

Testimony in support of HB2137, Relating to the Farm to Food Bank Program

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members:

I am testifying on behalf of Lanakila Pacific.

I support HB2137, which will establish the Hawaii farm to food bank program and Hawaii food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.

Food security is a growing concern, and it is important for the community and the Hawaii Foodbank to support locally grown food as one of the levers to alleviate food shortages. As a state isolated by the ocean, we need to be able to feed our citizens in an emergency. Supporting farming in Hawaii to do so is a win-win.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Aloha,

Rona Yagi Fukumoto
President and CEO

Lanakila Pacific Board
Matt Miller, *Chair*
Savan Patel, *Vice Chair*
Alton Murakami, *Treasurer*
Dawn Hirano, *Secretary*
Maria Borje-Bonkowski
Cleo Brown
Paige Heckathorn Choy

Joy Ishiara
William H. Kern
Sean Mochizuki
Michael Morales
Lacey Shimabukuro
Ryan Yamamoto

Lanakila Pacific
Foundation Board
Emmit Kane, *Chair*
Keith Suzuka, *Vice Chair*
Bryan Kapeckas,
Treasurer/ Secretary
Cecilia Fong
Kira Higa
Scott Kavanaugh

Derek Mizuno
Scott Nahme
Kristi O'Heron
Sharon Paris
Mike Robinson
Ryan Shiroma
Dwayne Takeno

President and CEO
Rona Yagi Fukumoto



LATE

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 9:16:03 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Susan B Roberts Emery | Green Party of Hawai'i | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

The Green Party of Hawai'i recognizes the need of better food supply to our local food banks. Many people in our communities are dependent upon healthy food supplies. We stand in support of HB2137 .

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai'i's agricultural sector and bolster local food security.

Mahalo for your consideration!

Susan RobertsEmery

Co chair GPH

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 9:22:09 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Violette Nacapoy | Giving Hope Hawaii | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

February 13, 2024

Testimony in support of HB2137, Relating to the Farm to Food Bank Program

Aloha:

I am testifying on behalf of Giving Hope Hawaii.

I support HB2137, which will establish the Hawaii farm to food bank program and Hawaii food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.

Without the help and partnership with Hawai'i Foodbank, Giving Hope Hawaii would not be able to feed over 3800 families a month suffering from food insecurity. Since January 2023 we have be able to service families, kupuna's and children with special needs from Waimanalo to Kahuku. Our pantry could not do this without the support from Hawaii Food Bank.

With Hawaii Foodbanks continued support and to get more food we can certainly stomp out food hunger in all our communities.

Our mission is simple: **To give glory to God and to promote human dignity.** Through the tireless efforts of our staff, volunteers, and corporate partners, we provide food and support to the hungry and needy on Oahu's Windward Side especially our Kūpuna and Keiki with special needs.

"For I was hungry and you fed me. For I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. For I was a stranger and you invited me into your home. For I was naked and you clothed me. For I was sick and you cared for me. For I was in prison and you visited me."

Mahalo for your consideration.

Aloha,

Violette Nacapoy

Chief of Operations, Director

Giving Hope Hawaii

Hawaii State Legislature

Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

February 14, 2024

Immanuel Christian Church

P. O. Box 4821

Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

Dear Chair Cedric Asuega Gates and Committee Members:

We support House Bill (HB) 2137 and H.B. 2590, which seeks to establish and appropriate funds for the Hawaii farm to food bank program to fund food banks and emergency feeding organizations in the State to purchase, store, and transport fresh locally grown or produced food to food insecure communities. This program will serve the State's food needs, provide local food producers with a market to support their operations, and keep moneys circulating within the State to boost the local economy.

Our church is a partner agency with the Hawaii Food Bank and we serve those in our community who are less fortunate and in need of food. We are a small church in Kaneohe and our volunteers pick up food twice a week at the Hawaii Food Bank and deliver it to various locations in the downtown Honolulu area. The recipient individuals are so grateful for what they receive and it helps them to meet their immediate nutritional needs. The bill is a win-win for both the farm to food bank and addresses these food insecurity needs while also investing in local agriculture. The food is provided and distributed free of charge.

We urge your committee's passage of both H.B. 2137 and H.B. 2590. Thank you for consideration.



Lloyd D. Rogers

Immanuel Christian Church

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 10:03:00 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Carlene Olguin | Paradise Chapel of the Assemblies of God | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

As an partner agency with the Hawaii Foodbank we would like to say we are in support of HB2137 and HB2590.

Farm to Foodbank addresses food insecurity needs while also investing in local agriculture and provide much needed healthy food to our community.

Paradisr Chapel is one of 200 agencies that partner with the Hawaii Foodbank in getting the much needed healthy food to the most vulnerable members of our community. Paradise Chapel relies on Hawaii Foodbank service to continue providing much needed food to families in need

.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,.



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 | Honolulu, HI 96813
P: 808-533-1292 | e: info@hawaiiifood.com

Executive Officers

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Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale Grocer, *Vice Chair*
Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp., *Secretary/Treas.*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *Executive Director*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Derek Kurisu, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, *Advisor*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Immediate Past Chair*

LATE

TO: Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 14, 2024
TIME: 9:15am
PLACE: Room 325

RE: HB2137 Relating to the Hawaii Farm to Foodbank Program

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 Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, Members of the Committee,

HFIA is in support of this measure. Injecting state funding into our local food systems has a range of benefits. In addition to providing healthy fresh food to people who utilize foodbanks in our state, this measure will also provide a consistent buyer to support our local agricultural producers.

We believe that in order to improve food security, local food production, and resiliency in Hawaii it's vital for the State to support programs like this which support our food industry. We thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

To: House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
Re: **HB 2137 – Relating to the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 14, 2024, 9:15 AM

Dear Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB 2137**. This bill establishes the Hawai'i farm to food bank program and Hawai'i food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.

According to Feeding America, more than 50,000 – or one in six – Hawai'i children are facing hunger.¹ Especially with highest cost of living and the second-most expensive groceries in the nation,² it is nearly impossible for the low-income families in Hawai'i to afford to buy healthy food, such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

In addition, it is well established that the stresses of childhood poverty have both immediate and long-term effects on keiki's physical and mental health, behavioral self-control, academic achievement, and earnings as adults.³

That's why it's so important to support Hawai'i's food banks. They and their partner agencies help ensure that struggling families do not go hungry by distributing millions of pounds of food per year to those in need in our state.

Food banks were a lifeline during the pandemic when our state had some of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. But even with folks back at work, recent high inflation rates have led to our state's food banks to continue to see demand that's higher than before the pandemic.

This program has the added plus of supporting our local farms. Farm to food bank programs are a win-win, by providing healthy local food to those who need it and purchasing from local farmers.

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony. Please pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hawaii>

² <https://meric.mo.gov/data/cost-living-data-series>

³ <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/indicator/2014/06/childhood-poverty>

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Feb 14, 2024, 10:49 am



LATE

February 14, 2024

Testimony in support of HB2137, Relating to the Farm to Food Bank Program

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members:

I am testifying on behalf of The Pantry by Feeding Hawaii Together.

I support HB2137, which will establish the Hawaii farm to food bank program and Hawaii food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.

With almost 50% of Hawai'i residents facing the harsh reality of food insecurity, initiatives like the Farm to Food Bank program are a crucial part of our fight against hunger. Not only will it increase our access to local, fresh produce, by enabling The Hawaii Foodbank to provide these items to partner agencies like ours, it will set a precedent for a healthier and more nourished Hawaii. The Pantry serves approximately 1,000 families a week and this bill will directly support the thousands of families that we serve. This initiative would help support a resilient supply chain, build capacity for food security within our state, and support local farmers. Our families deserve equitable access to nutritious food. We kindly ask your support of this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Aloha,

Jennine Sullivan

Executive Director

Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Anabella Bruce
Vice-President

Maureen Datt
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Chapter Presidents

Clarence Baber
Kohala, Hawai'i

Odysseus Yacalis
East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Andrea Drayer
Ka'u, Hawai'i

Kona, Hawai'i

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hana, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakala, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahalawai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Rufina Kaauwai
Molokai

Negus Manna
Lāna'i

India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich
Waimanalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kauai



RECEIVED
Date & Time
Feb 14, 2024, 10:48 am

LATE

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems Committee,

The Hawaii Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFUU supports HB2137.**

Food insecurity is a serious issue in Hawaii. Our state's farmers are a vital part of the solution, and the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program provides a crucial link between our farmers and those in need.

We recommend removing mention of "emergency feeding organizations" to clarify that the program will focus on food banks.

We believe it is essential to strengthen partnerships between the food banks and agricultural producers to bring fresh produce and other foods to households in need. Additionally, we are confident that the monetary appropriations will enable farmer and food banks to provide the much-needed food access for the state's residents.

The emphasis on local food sourcing is a strategic move towards enhancing the state's resilience in emergencies. By establishing a steady, local supply chain of essential food items, we mitigate the risks associated with external supply chain disruptions. Local sourcing ensures that, in times of crisis of local or global origin, our communities have reliable access to nutritious food.

In conclusion, the Hawaii Farmers Union strongly supports the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program. This program not only serves the State's immediate food needs but also provides a sustainable market for local food producers, keeping money circulating within the State to boost our local economy. We urge the legislature to pass this bill, recognizing its potential to significantly impact both our agricultural sector and the food security of our communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 1:21:15 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Kristin Mills | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Please support HB2137. Hawaii has a high food insecurity level, yet we have the climate that supports growing food year round. We also have high overweight and obesity levels and our residents need more access to affordable and healthy food, such as fresh grown produce.

This bill can help reduce our food insecurity and improve the diet of Hawaii residents, leading to improved health.

Please support HB2137.

Sincerely,

Kristin Mills

Maui resident, parent, and health educator

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 1:58:47 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jeffrey Vigilla | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Food insecurity remains a critical issue in Hawaii.

- Farm to food bank addresses these food insecurity needs while also investing in local agriculture—a win-win.

- Hawai‘i Foodbank’s Farm to Foodbank program, launched in March 2020, has been a tremendous success, providing healthy, locally-grown produce to those we serve.

- Hawai‘i Foodbank works with a network of more than 200 partner agencies, or emergency feeding organizations, to distribute food to the community. Each partner agency receives food safety and civil rights trainings, and all food is provided to our agencies free of charge. We distributed 19.5 million pounds of food, or food for 16.2 million meals, through these channels in 2023, including nearly 5 million pounds of fresh produce.

Honorable Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems,

I write to you today in earnest support of the proposed legislation to establish and appropriate funds for the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program (HB21370). As a concerned citizen deeply invested in the welfare of our community, I wholeheartedly believe that this initiative is not only crucial but also morally imperative.

Hawaii, despite its breathtaking natural beauty, faces significant challenges when it comes to food insecurity. Many of our residents, including vulnerable populations such as children, seniors, and low-income families, struggle to access nutritious meals on a consistent basis. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these hardships, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive solutions.

The Farm to Food Bank Program presents a visionary approach to addressing food insecurity in our state. By ensuring that food banks are able to pay fair market value for locally sourced products from Hawai'i farmers, this program not only helps local farmers but also ensures that nutritious food reaches those who need it most. It leverages our local agricultural resources to nourish our communities, fostering resilience and solidarity in the face of adversity.

Furthermore, the appropriation of funds for this program is a strategic investment in the health and well-being of Hawaii's residents. By allocating resources to support the infrastructure and operations of food banks, we can strengthen their capacity to serve those in need effectively. This funding will enable them to expand healthy food outreach efforts, enhance distribution, and procure essential supplies, thereby empowering them to make a meaningful impact on ensuring healthy food across the state.

Moreover, the Farm to Food Bank Program aligns with our shared values of sustainability and community stewardship. By forging partnerships between local farmers and food banks, we promote collaboration and mutual support within our agricultural and social sectors. This will demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that no one in Hawaii goes hungry.

In conclusion, I urge you to champion the passage of this critical legislation to establish and appropriate funds for the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program. Let us seize this opportunity to uplift our communities, protect our most vulnerable members, and build a brighter future for all residents of our beloved state. Together, we can cultivate a healthier, more resilient Hawaii where no one is left behind.

Thank you for your attention and leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Butel".

Jean Butel

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

Sadly, hunger is on the rise in Hawai'i and therefore so is the number of households which rely on food banks. This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai'i to local communities for distribution. This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai'i, benefiting our economy.

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai'i's agricultural sector and bolster local food security. Mahalo for your consideration!

Robert H. Pahia
Maui, Hawaii

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 3:56:59 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Stephanie Austin | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

This important bill supports both our Hawaii Foodbanks and our local farmers - a win win! As a Maui resident, I have seen how essential the Maui Foodbank has been to our devastated community in the six months following the Lahaina Fires, and continues to be!

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 4:26:24 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Hayley Peter-Contesse | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

Sadly, hunger is on the rise in Hawai'i and therefore so is the number of households which rely on food banks. This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai'i to local communities for distribution. This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai'i, benefiting our economy.

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai'i's agricultural sector and bolster local food security. Mahalo for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Hayley Peter-Contesse, PhD

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 4:52:47 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jacqueline S. Ambrose | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha,

RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM.

Establishes the Hawaii farm to food bank program and Hawaii food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.
Appropriates funds

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 6:03:42 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Patti Hatzistavrakis | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I, Patti Hatzistavrakis, am fully in support of the passing of 2137 HB RELATING TO THE HAWAII FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM. I feel that it can have a positive impact on the sustainability of our islands by ensuring locally grown produce is available to feed our island populations. And, can also positively impact the health of our community members by enabling them to choose healthy options directly from food banks. In addition, given the high price of food here in the islands, the passing of 2137 HB can help families stretch their food budget. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of 2137 HB and for your consideration.

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:19:44 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hannah Hyun | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Food is a basic human necessity and sadly continues to be a critical issue here in Hawaii. Farm to food bank addresses these food insecurity needs, while also supporting local farmers and agriculture. Hawaii Foodbank's Farm to Foodbank program launched in March of 2020 and has been a huge success! It provides healthy, locally-grown produce to those they serve. I am writing in support of this program - it provides support to local families in need with local produce that helps our local farmers.

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:27:04 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Sven Sorge | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

Sadly, hunger is on the rise in Hawai‘i and therefore so is the number of households which rely on food banks. This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai‘i to local communities for distribution. This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai‘i, benefiting our economy.

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai‘i’s agricultural sector and bolster local food security. Mahalo for your consideration!

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:29:24 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Nanea Lo | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Hello Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa and Members of the Committee,

Sadly, hunger is on the rise in Hawai'i and therefore so is the number of households which rely on food banks. This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai'i to local communities for distribution. This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai'i, benefiting our economy.

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai'i's agricultural sector and bolster local food security. Mahalo for your consideration!

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo, Mō'ili'ili, O'ahu

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:34:44 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Eliel Starbright | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa and Members of the Committee, Sadly, hunger is on the rise in Hawai‘i and therefore so is the number of households which rely on food banks. This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai‘i to local communities for distribution. This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai‘i, benefiting our economy.

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai‘i’s agricultural sector and bolster local food security. Mahalo for your consideration! Eliel Starbright, Kapaa

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 9:06:17 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Will Caron | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Please support HB2137.

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 9:41:20 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Mary Lu Kelley | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

Hunger is on the rise in Hawai‘i and therefore so is the number of households which rely on food banks. This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai‘i to local communities for distribution. This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai‘i, benefiting our economy.

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai‘i’s agricultural sector and bolster local food security. Do the right thing.

Mahalo for your consideration!

Mary Lu Kelley

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 11:13:01 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| KEALA FUNG | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

I am a low income household and food banks are important to me because I rely on them to supplement my household's food. This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai'i to local communities for distribution. This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai'i, benefiting our economy.

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai'i's agricultural sector and bolster local food security. Mahalo for your consideration!

Keala Fung, Honolulu

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 8:37:11 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Patricia Blair | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Please pass

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 8:51:40 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Regina Gregory | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

support

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 9:30:49 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Pam Murphy | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

Sadly, hunger is on the rise in Hawai'i and therefore so is the number of households which rely on food banks. This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai'i to local communities for distribution. This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai'i, benefiting our economy.

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai'i's agricultural sector and bolster local food security. Mahalo for your consideration!

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 9:45:25 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Blanche McMillan | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I approve on this House Bill (HB217) to be approved by Blanche McMillan.



LATE

To: Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday, February 14, 2024

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of HB2137

From: Andrew Ogata, Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members:

The Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) strongly supports HB2137, which will establish the Hawaii farm to food bank program and Hawaii food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State.

HHRC's mission is to *reduce harm, promote health, create wellness and fight stigma in Hawaii and the Pacific*. We focus our efforts on those disproportionately affected by social determinants of health, including but not limited to: people living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the transgender, LGBTQ and the Native Hawaiian communities.

During 2020 and 2021, HHRC partnered with the Hawai'i Food Bank on food drops around the island and helps disseminate more than 500,000 pounds of food to thousands of families and saw first hand how desperate our families are to get healthy and fresh foods that they otherwise could not afford. The food we distributed through the Hawai'i Foodbank's Farm to Foodbank program was so well received by the community, and has been a tremendous success, providing healthy, locally-grown produce to those we serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Andrew Ogata, Director of Development, Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center

LATE

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 10:54:58 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Jessica Kuzmier | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

Sadly, hunger is on the rise in Hawai'i and therefore so is the number of households which rely on food banks. This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai'i to local communities for distribution. This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai'i, benefiting our economy.

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai'i's agricultural sector and bolster local food security. Mahalo for your consideration!

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 11:36:53 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM



| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Laura Caverly | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha,

please support this bill in order that those in need get more access to fresh, healthy food.

Mahalo,

Laura

LATE

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 11:45:38 AM
Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Tadia Rice | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I strongly support HB2137 because many families in Hawaii struggle to put food on the table on a consistent basis. HB2137 is a smart idea that supports our farmers and at the same time helps our local families in need by providing local, fresh, healthy options.

We must make efforts to support our farmers and families will help to build our food security and our resiliency, while at the same time avoiding the greenhouse gases that would have been emitted from shipping in food.

This is a win:win for everyone!

Mahalo.

LATE



February 14, 2024

House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

RE: Testimony in support of HB 2137, Relating to the Hawaii Farm to Food Bank Program

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloe, and Committee Members,

My name is Charla Teves. I am a college student and a life-long resident of Honolulu. This year, I was named one of five national Stephen J. Brady Scholars by the Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation. I am testifying in support of HB 2137.

When I was a senior in high school, two Honolulu radio DJs mocked a popular singer for her experiences with childhood hunger. Along with the rest of our community, I was shocked by their insensitivity. It opened my eyes to the intensive needs right here in my hometown. I am asking for your help to adopt policies that will eliminate hunger in our lifetime.

One in five Hawaii children struggle with hunger, according to Feeding America. At more than 55,000 children, they would fill the Stan Sheriff Center four times over and still overflow into the parking lot. In 2021, I was one of 100 students nationwide awarded a Youth Service America and Sodexo Stop Hunger grant which enabled me to convene a Hawai'i virtual end hunger summit. Many state legislators, community leaders, students, and young adults convened to share their ideas such as supporting a statewide food policy and school gardens. I learned so much from the experience that I can no longer remain quiet. Since then, I have volunteered with many food drives and in other ways to help end hunger. Based on these experiences, I know for sure that your support of food banks in Hawaii will make a difference.

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

LATE

HB-2137

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 2:57:24 PM
Testimony for AGR on 2/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| pamela burrell | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai‘i, benefiting our economy.

Sadly, hunger is on the rise in Hawai‘i and therefore so is the number of households which rely on food banks.

Please support HB 2137 to help grow Hawai‘i’s agricultural sector and bolster local food security. Mahalo for your consideration!

Pamela Burrell

Kalihiwai, Kaua‘i

Testimony of Kiana Otsuka in Support

Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

February 14, 2024 at 9:15AM

Conference Room 325

HB 2137

LATE

Relating to Hawaii Farm to Food Bank

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

My name is Kiana Otsuka, and I am passionate about sustainable food systems and improving food equity in Hawai'i. I am writing in **strong support of HB 2137**, which establishes the Hawai'i farm to food bank program and Hawai'i food assistance program special fund to alleviate food shortages in the State. It also appropriates funds for a specified number of positions within the Department of Agriculture and makes an appropriation.

Sadly, hunger is on the rise in Hawai'i and therefore so is the number of households which rely on food banks. This measure would provide a source of funding for the program to fund state food banks to purchase, store, and transport food grown or produced in Hawai'i to local communities for distribution. This program will serve our food needs, provide local food producers with a supporting market and keep money in Hawai'i, benefiting our economy.

In addition to reducing hunger, food banks help to build communities by providing jobs and purchasing goods and services from local businesses, creating an economic stimulus in the areas they serve. Importantly, food donations also help low-income families free up money to meet other basic needs.

Supporting locally sourced food benefits the local economy, helps us become less dependent on tourism and more resilient and secure as an island chain. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers boosts local farmers' incomes.

Closer proximity relationships with our food will in turn also reduce carbon emissions related to shipping and packaging waste associated with importation from the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Mahalo,
Kiana Otsuka

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Feb 14, 2024, 10:48 am

LATE



Date: February 13, 2024
To: AGR
From: Climate Future Forum
Re: **STRONG SUPPORT for HB2137**
Hearing: Feb 14, 2024

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

On behalf of the Climate Future Forum, I'm writing to you in **strong support of HB2137**. Climate Future Forum (CFF) is a network of youth and adults dedicated to supportive climate policy and legislation. From an event held on December 9, 2023 at the Hawai'i State Capitol when youth and policy makers convened, a list of priority bills was agreed upon.

The mission of the **Climate Future Forum** (<https://www.climatefuturehawaii.org/>) is to inspire youth to be active and engaged participants in developing and advocating for climate policy and legislation. We do so by bringing together youth (ages 14-26), educators, policymakers, and nonprofits to evaluate and discuss climate action priorities and provide tangible steps to empower youth. Our hope is for youth to forge relationships with policymakers so that they can continue to work together throughout the legislative process in Hawai'i and beyond.

On December 9th, 2023, the Climate Future Forum was held at the Hawaii State Capitol. The event included over 80 youth, adults, legislators and staff members, and about 30 people from the community. One of the goals of this event was for youth to develop their legislative priorities for the 2023 legislative session. One of their priorities is centered around improving food systems. Therefore, the Climate Future Forum strongly supports this bill because by creating a coordinated food systems plan we will be able to:

- increase local food security through a coordinated approach
- achieve the state's goals for local food production and support local farmers
- diversify Hawai'i's economy by supporting a robust local food economy
- contribute to the local agricultural industry (new markets, more stability, more jobs)
- reduce food miles and associated greenhouse gas emissions

Please pass this bill out of your committee.

Mahalo nui loa,
Paul Bernstein on behalf of the Climate Future Forum