

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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2024
1:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2424
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2424. This bill establishes within the department of agriculture a program specialist position, declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded and appropriates funds. The Department is in strong support of this bill.

The program specialist would seek, apply for, and administer grants from federal agencies as well as other sources of funding such as counties, nonprofit organizations, foundations and private organizations. The position would serve as the HDOA representative to the Administration's Federal Grant working group and coordinate opportunities with the applicable divisions within the Department.

There are over 2000 competitive funding opportunities in the Grants.gov database that the specialist can filter through. Using the keywords "Hawaii" and "Pacific", there are over 300 grants and cooperative agreements offered. Searching for "aquaculture", important to Hawaii, displays 60 opportunities. The specialist would have



access to technical assistance offered by the Federal Grant working group and in collaboration with commodity groups, agriculture associations, and other Departments, including UH CTAHR Researchers and Extension Agents, gather content for a robust application.

Due to current capacity limitations, many of the grants HDOA applies for are formula/block grants that are allocated to the states via a formula and are awarded to states that apply for the formula/block grant. The program specialist would be tasked to apply for the competitive grants. The trend for competitive grants in the \$50 to \$100 million range are for regional applications which benefit the Pacific Region. These applications require collaboration and coordination, requiring time and expertise which would be fulfilled by the program specialist. Even one of these grants awarded a year would more than compensate for the investment in the position.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

SB-2424

Submitted on: 1/28/2024 5:12:01 PM

Testimony for AEN on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Redfeather	Testifying for Ka Ohana O Na Pua	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Inadaquate Staffing at HDOA is one reason that has enabled invasive species to spread unnecessarily in the State impacting all our necessary businesses. These postiiions are imperative!

Also, instead of all these Bills have one HDOA Invasive Species Bill, or one Bill that outlines all the needs HDOA is asking for. This micromanagement of such an important State Agency is unmnecessary. Mahalo.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT
Wednesday, January 31, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Ulupono Initiative strongly supports SB 2424, Relating to Agriculture.

Dear Chair Gabbard 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, clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono strongly supports SB 2424, which establishes within the Department of Agriculture (DOA) a program specialist to support with grant writing.

Ulupono supports the State's efforts to actively pursue grant opportunities that help local agriculturalists. Many federal programs are dedicated to state departments or agencies who can apply for funding to support local initiatives. Establishing a position at the DOA for this work is extremely timely, not only to meet the needs of local farmers and ranchers, but also due to the funding that has been made available by the federal government.

The return on investment for the State can be substantial and transformative. For example, from 2014 to 2023, Ulupono provided funding for grant writers with organizations such as The Kohala Center, the O'ahu Agriculture and Conservation Association, and the Hawai'i Farm Bureau. These efforts brought in a total of approximately \$140 million, 100 times the full grant writing investment. Similarly, Ulupono believes that the State should strongly consider general funding DOA grant writers as they will be well worth the investment, and result in millions of dollars in federal funding to further support the State's agricultural efforts.

We appreciate this committee's effort to hear important measures that look to establish long-term support for our local farmers and ranchers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

Attachment

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i

THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REQUEST THAT WILL *BRING MORE MONEY TO HAWAI'I*

Funding grant writing staff within the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) is a valuable investment that can yield a high return and long-term benefits for the state. The HDOA's operating budget request is \$300,000 in general funds for three currently vacant full-time employee (FTE) positions. Filling these positions follows through on legislators' requests to maximize existing positions toward legislative intent.

HDOA's Ask

HDOA is requesting funding for three existing grant writer positions to be dedicated to securing block and competitive federal grant programs.

- **Examples of block grants:**
 - USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant program (\$500,000)
 - USDA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network program (\$500,000)
 - USDA Micro-Grants for Food Security program (\$3.0 million)
 - USDA Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (\$3.2 million)
- **Additional grants:**
 - Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (\$250,000)
 - Multi-State Specialty Crop Block Grant (\$500,000)
 - Community Wildfire Defense Grant (\$5 million)
 - Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (\$1 million)

Why Grant Writers?

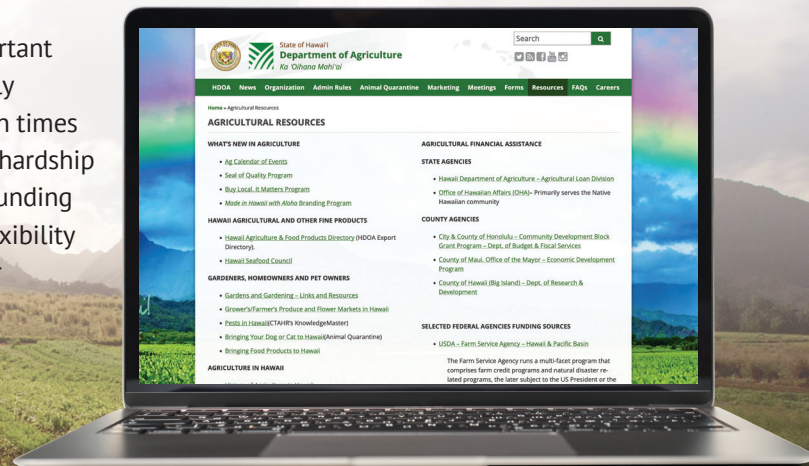
Based on these few examples, this \$300,000 investment could secure \$13.95 million in funding (46.5x return on investment) with more funding available.

Skilled grant writers will help the State to:

- Access federal funds by preparing competitive and compelling grant proposals that align with local farmer needs
- Identify and pursue grants that supplement and leverage existing State resources, maximizing the impact of HDOA's programs

Federal grants will provide:

- Additional means to support important projects and services without solely relying on State funds, especially in times of natural disasters and economic hardship
- A diversified source of long-term funding for HDOA, offering stability and flexibility to address emerging challenges or capitalize on new opportunities



THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REQUEST THAT WILL BRING MORE MONEY TO HAWAII

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Did You Know That ...

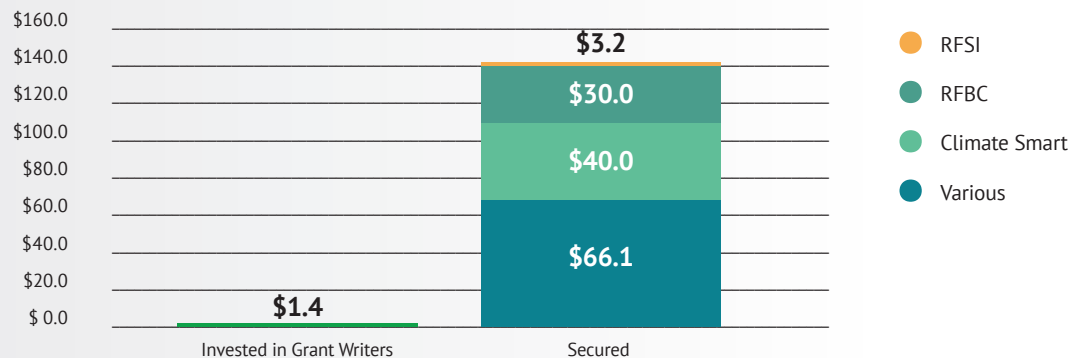
Stimulus bills approved by Congress beginning in 2020 unleashed the largest flood of federal money into the U.S. economy. Roughly \$5 trillion went to households, mom-and-pop shops, restaurants, airlines, hospitals, local governments, schools, and other institutions around the country grappling with the blow inflicted by COVID-19. A number of large USDA grant programs were created. The HDOA needs grant writer support in order to go after these multi-million-dollar opportunities.

Other Benefits for the State

By having grant writers on HDOA's staff, the State will benefit from:

- Grant writing is a specialized skill, and having dedicated grant writers allows other HDOA staff to focus on their core responsibilities leading to better use of resources and expertise.
- Aligned grant-seeking efforts with the HDOA's strategic goals and priorities ensures that all federal funding opportunities will support the agency's long-term objectives.
- Stronger partnership with Hawaii's congressional delegation to better communicate the agricultural industry's needs.

Funding Invested vs. Secured (\$s in Millions)



Return on Investment

Grant writers provide a significant return on investment

Investing in grant-writing capacity not only pays for itself but also brings in funds several times the initial investment.

- The Kohala Center, O'ahu Agriculture & Conservation Association, and Hawaii Farm Bureau invested \$1.4 million in grant writers over the past 10 years.
- Secured ~\$140 million for local agriculture (100x return on investment).
- This included unprecedented funding from the USDA.
 - \$40 million from the Climate-Smart Commodities program to help farmers fund climate-smart farming practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
 - \$30 million from the Regional Food Business Centers (RFBC) program to establish regional centers, which provide farmers with grants and connect them with federal programs.
 - \$3.2 million from the newly created USDA Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) program.

Ulupono's Support of Maui Wildfire Efforts

After the Lahaina wildfire, the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) to support its efforts helping other organizations apply for more than \$60 million from the USDA Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) program, including the Departments of Land and Natural Resources and Hawaiian Home Lands, non-profit organizations and homeowner's associations.



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

January 31, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 2424
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, and Members of the Committees:

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.

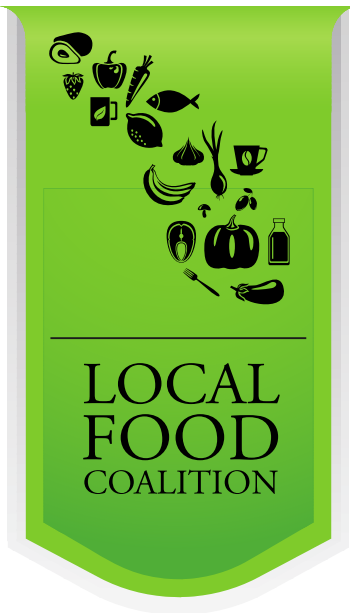
The Hawai'i Farm Bureau strongly supports SB 2424, which establishes within the Department of Agriculture a program specialist position.

The decrease in direct Federal appropriations for agriculture has resulted in an increased level of dependence on grants. Many federal programs have turned into competitive grant programs.

Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers are finding it difficult to secure the financial support necessary to build capacity. Grant writing for USDA, State, County, and other grants usually involves a very complex application process that can be difficult to navigate through. This often deters farmers and ranchers from applying for USDA and other grants. A well-trained and skilled grant writer would be able to assist farmers and ranchers obtain USDA and other grants by assisting them with applying for and fulfilling the requirements of the grants.

Access to USDA and other grants can result in increased capacity, new business opportunities, increased employment opportunities and address Hawai'i's goals of increased self-sufficiency and sustainability.

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



SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
January 31, 2024 – 1:00 p.m. – Conference Room 224 &
Videoconference

**SB 2424 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE
SB 2361 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE
IN SUPPORT**

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

The Local Food Coalition **SUPPORTS** SB 2424 and SB 2361,
which would establish a program specialist and two grant specialist
positions within the Department of Agriculture, respectively.

These positions would allow the department to seek federal funding
opportunities to help the Department of Agriculture in achieving the
state’s goal of increasing local food production and help our local
farmers and ranchers. The return on investment could be
significant.

As an example, the Ulupono Initiative’s \$1.4 million funding of grant
writers for three organizations over the past ten years has resulted
in securing approximately \$140 million for local agriculture.

The pandemic, supply chain, and inflation highlighted the need to
increase Hawaii’s food self-sufficiency and reduce our reliance on
imports. Now is the time to reinvest in our local agricultural industry.

The Local Food Coalition is an organization comprised of farmers,
ranchers, livestock producers, investors and other organizations
working to provide Hawaii’s food supply.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

- Hawai'i Aquaculture & Aquaponics Association
- Hawai'i Cattlemen's Council
- Hawai'i Farm Bureau Federation
- Hawai'i Farmers' Union United
- Hawai'i Food Industry Association
- Hawai'i Food Manufacturers Association
- Kohala Center
- Land Use Research Foundation of Hawai'i
- Maui Farm to School Network (Maui F2SN)
- Ulupono Initiative
- College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources - University of Hawai'i at Manoa



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

January 30, 2024

Subject: *SB 2424, Relating to Agriculture*

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

We are writing to express our support for SB 2424, a bill that seeks to establish and fund a program specialist position within the Department of Agriculture to maximize funding opportunities from federal and other sources for agricultural purposes. This crucial initiative addresses the current gaps in grant writing and grant administration capacities and expertise, which hinder Hawaii's ability to fully tap into available funding opportunities for our agricultural sector.

The establishment of a full-time program specialist position, as outlined in the bill, is a strategic move to address the complexities of grant applications and administration. The specialist will play a pivotal role in seeking and writing grants, providing technical assistance, performing needs assessments, and offering guidance to agricultural operators. This not only ensures that our farmers, ranchers, and agricultural operators are aware of funding opportunities but also assists them in navigating the often arduous application processes.

Moreover, the prioritization of assistance to farmers and ranchers who produce local food aligns with the goal of fostering a sustainable and vibrant agricultural community within the State. By supporting this bill we are investing in the resilience and success of our local farmers ensuring the continued availability of fresh locally produced food for our communities.

We Hawaii Food+ Policy urges you to consider the long-term benefits that SB 2424 can bring to Hawaii's agricultural sector. By providing the necessary resources and expertise, we empower our farmers to thrive, contribute to economic growth, and enhance food security for our state. We respectfully request that you support and pass this crucial bill.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Mahalo,
Kaitlyn Shimizu & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

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 undergraduates 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.



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

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