JOSH GREEN, M.D. Governor

> SYLVIA LUKE Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEXTER KISHIDADeputy 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 WATER AND LAND AND COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2024 1:15 PM CONFERENCE ROOM 229 AND VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE BILL NO. 2803 RELATING TO THE KOHALA DITCH

Chairs Inouye and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Elefante and Richards, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2803. This bill makes the Department of Agriculture responsible for the routine maintenance of the Kohala ditch. Requires the Department of Agriculture to develop a plan for the refurbishment of the Kohala ditch and submit a report to the Legislature. It also appropriates money and declares that the appropriation exceeds the state general fund expenditure ceiling for 2024-2025. The Department offers comments with strong concerns.

It is our understanding that the Kohala ditch is a private system that has been in disrepair for many years and has somewhat recently experienced a catastrophic flume failure. Additionally, we are unsure of the number of agricultural users that existed before the failure and have anecdotally heard it was in decline. We do understand that this once served as a significant irrigation system and that there is a desire to maintain it. Past and present experience with irrigation systems hints that significant resources, both capital and human, will be necessary to rebuild this system and maintain it in a safe and reliable condition.



Without a clear understanding of the potential liabilities associated with this endeavor, we respectfully suggest that a due diligence study be conducted that will identify the realistic future use, estimated capital costs, and recurring management costs associated with this system. We estimate an initial cost of \$1,500,000 to complete this study of the 23-mile system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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 5, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND

TESTIMONY ON SB 2803 RELATING TO THE KOHALA DITCH

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference 1:15 PM

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and Inouye, Vice-Chairs Richards and Elefante, and Members of the Committees:

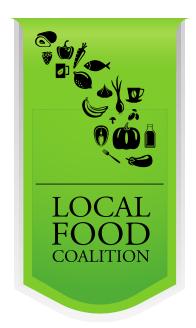
I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai i Farm Bureau supports SB 2803, which makes the Department of Agriculture responsible for the routine maintenance of the Kohala ditch and requires the Department of Agriculture to develop a plan for the refurbishment of the Kohala ditch and submit a report to the Legislature.

Since the demise of plantation operations across the islands, we have seen the erosion of irrigation systems. The repair and maintenance of these systems are critical because our farmers and ranchers depend on these irrigation systems for their operations. Water is a basic necessity for farmers and ranchers to maintain and expand their production. The reliability of water is essential for our farmers and ranchers to grow crops and raise livestock efficiently.

The Kohala Ditch serviced thousands of acres of agricultural land in North Kohala. The repair and maintenance of this 14.5-mile irrigation system is critical for Kohala farmers who depend on water for their operations. The 2023 Legislature appropriated \$10,000,000 to restore, reactivate, and repair the Kohala Ditch. However, funding for continued repairs and maintenance is needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND Monday, February 5, 2024 – 1:15 p.m. – Conference Room 229 &

Videoconference

SB 2803 – RELATING TO THE KOHALA DITCH

SUPPORT

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and Inouye, Vice Chairs Richards and Elefante and Members of the Committees:

The Local Food Coalition **SUPPORTS** SB 2803, which makes the Department of Agriculture responsible for the routine maintenance of the Kohala Ditch, to develop a plan for its refurbishment and submit an annual report to the Legislature.

Water is a vital and necessary resource for the agricultural industry. Without water, farmers and ranchers will not be able to grow food and raise cattle to help the state reach its goal of increasing local food production and reduce our reliance on imports.

The Kohala Ditch has provided water to farmers and ranchers in the North Kohala region of Hawaii Island for over a century. It is important to maintain and improve this valuable resource to ensure that it will be available to support agricultural producers now and in the future.

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 in support of SB 2803.



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Chair Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair

SB2803

RELATING TO THE KOHALA DITCH

Monday, February 5, 2024, 1:15 PM Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Chairs Gabbard and Inouye, Vice Chairs Richards and Elefante, and Members of the Committees,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council <u>supports SB2803</u> which makes the Department of Agriculture responsible for the routine maintenance of the Kohala ditch and requires the Department of Agriculture to develop a plan for the refurbishment of the Kohala ditch and submit a report to the Legislature.

Water systems require funding to ensure that these assets continue to remain usable for current and future Hawaii ag producers. Rancher and farmers rely on water to grow our food, and it is paramount that we maintain the systems we have in place. While we advocate for our priority of keeping agricultural land in agricultural production, we must also recognize the needs that producers need to stay in business – the vital being land and water.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Our member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of over 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase Hawaii Cattlemen's Council Managing Director







