
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that, in a 2019 report,
2 the United States Department of Agriculture found that
3 agricultural theft and vandalism, and the expense of security
4 measures to prevent these crimes in the State, cost farmers
5 roughly \$14,400,000. In 2020, the Hawaii department of
6 agriculture reported sixty-six cases of felony agricultural
7 theft, thirty cases of trespassing, and forty-eight other
8 related offenses in Hawaii county.

9 In 2024, a rancher was killed in a confrontation on Oahu,
10 allegedly stemming from trespassing. This incident highlights
11 the heightened opportunity for violent crimes to occur when
12 weapons are present during disputes on farms and ranches.

13 The legislature further finds that agricultural crime is
14 likely underreported throughout the State. The rural locations
15 of ranches and farms can make it challenging for law enforcement
16 agencies to timely respond to reports, especially agencies that
17 may be understaffed or do not prioritize agricultural crimes



1 compared to other violent and property crimes. Consequently,
2 the ability to prevent, investigate, and prosecute agricultural
3 crimes statewide must be prioritized to ensure community safety
4 on all islands.

5 The legislature recognizes that there is a recruitment
6 challenge within the department of law enforcement, including
7 the ability to recruit new law enforcement officers to serve in
8 specific and identified areas of law enforcement. One solution
9 to increase the pool of law enforcement candidates is to
10 authorize individuals who have an aloha (love) or kuleana
11 (responsibility) with the agricultural community to help with
12 the deterrence, investigation, and enforcement of laws and rules
13 directly relating to agricultural crimes and make a difference
14 in the agricultural community in the State, including
15 volunteers.

16 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 17 (1) Establish an agricultural enforcement program within
18 the department of law enforcement;
19 (2) Establish the agricultural enforcement special fund;
20 and



1 (3) Appropriate funds for and establish positions within
2 the agricultural enforcement program.

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 353C, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
4 amended by adding two new sections to be appropriately
5 designated and to read as follows:

6 "§353C-A Agricultural enforcement program. (a) There is
7 established within the department an agricultural enforcement
8 program. The department shall employ or appoint, and remove,
9 the following persons, subject to chapter 76 and section 78-1:

10 (1) An assistant chief, who shall be the administrator of
11 the agricultural enforcement program and shall have
12 charge, direction, and control, subject to the
13 direction of control of the director, of all matters
14 relating to the enforcement of the offense of theft of
15 an agricultural product or commodity as defined in
16 section 708-835.55, and any other matters as
17 determined by the director. The assistant chief shall
18 be an administrator experienced in addressing
19 agricultural theft; and

20 (2) Personnel, state law enforcement officers, and
21 investigators, including but not limited to state law



1 enforcement officers serving on a voluntary basis
2 without pay.

3 (b) In addition to all police powers and duties, state law
4 enforcement officers in the agricultural enforcement program
5 shall:

6 (1) Focus on offenses under sections 708-830.5, 708-831,
7 708-832, and 708-833 that involve the theft of an
8 agricultural product or commodity;

9 (2) Gather evidence, conduct investigations, and conduct
10 field observations, as required or assigned;

11 (3) Cooperate with any enforcement authorities of the
12 federal, state, or county government in the
13 development of programs and mutual aid agreements for
14 agricultural activities within the State; and

15 (4) Carry out other duties and responsibilities as
16 determined by the director.

17 (c) The department shall enter into memoranda of agreement
18 with the division of conservation and resources enforcement of
19 the department of land and natural resources and each county
20 police department, as necessary, to effectuate the purposes of
21 this section.



1 §353C-B Agricultural enforcement special fund;

2 established. (a) There is established in the state treasury
3 the agricultural enforcement special fund to be administered by
4 the department.

5 (b) The following shall be deposited into the agricultural
6 enforcement special fund:

7 (1) Grants, awards, donations, gifts, transfers, or moneys
8 derived from public or private sources for the
9 purposes of enforcing offenses that involve the theft
10 of an agricultural product or commodity, or any other
11 matters as determined by the director;

12 (2) Fees, reimbursements, administrative charges, and
13 penalties collected for activities related to the
14 enforcement of laws and rules applicable to protecting
15 agricultural products or commodities, except as
16 otherwise provided by any law that requires deposit of
17 these moneys into other special funds administered by
18 the department of agriculture;

19 (3) Moneys derived from any interest, dividends, or other
20 income from the sources in paragraphs (1) to (2); and

21 (4) Appropriations by the legislature.



- 1 (c) The agricultural enforcement special fund shall be
2 used for expenditures relating to the agricultural enforcement
3 program established pursuant to section 353C-A, including:
- 4 (1) Training;
 - 5 (2) Research;
 - 6 (3) Equipment;
 - 7 (4) Preparation and dissemination of information to the
8 public;
 - 9 (5) Data collection and development;
 - 10 (6) Information technology;
 - 11 (7) Safety;
 - 12 (8) Wireless communication;
 - 13 (9) Management;
 - 14 (10) Travel;
 - 15 (11) Equipment rental;
 - 16 (12) Repairs;
 - 17 (13) Planning;
 - 18 (14) Information;
 - 19 (15) Education;
 - 20 (16) Operations;



1 (17) Maintenance functions authorized and deemed necessary
2 by the board of agriculture;

3 (18) Funding for consultants or contractual hires related
4 to the enforcement of laws and rules applicable to the
5 offense of theft of an agricultural product or
6 commodity, or any other matters as determined by the
7 board of agriculture; and

8 (19) Work performed in cooperation with enforcement
9 authorities of the federal, state, or county
10 government.

11 (d) The agricultural enforcement special fund shall be
12 held separate and apart from all other moneys, funds, and
13 accounts in the department; provided that any moneys received
14 from the federal government or from private contributions shall
15 be deposited and accounted for in accordance with any conditions
16 established by the department or entity from which the moneys
17 are received. Any balance remaining in the agricultural
18 enforcement special fund at the end of any fiscal year shall be
19 carried forward in the fund for the next fiscal year."

20 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
21 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much



1 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the
2 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
3 2026-2027 to be deposited into the agricultural enforcement
4 special fund established pursuant to section 353C-B, Hawaii
5 Revised Statutes.

6 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the agricultural
7 enforcement special fund the sum of \$ or so much
8 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the
9 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
10 2026-2027 for:

11 (1) The establishment of the following positions within
12 the agricultural enforcement program established
13 pursuant to section 353C-A, Hawaii Revised Statutes:

14 (A) One full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) assistant
15 chief position;

16 (B) Eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE) state law
17 enforcement investigator positions; provided that
18 the four counties shall be assigned two positions
19 each; and

20 (C) Thirty-six full-time equivalent (36.0 FTE)
21 uniformed state law enforcement officer positions



1 for patrol functions; provided that the counties
 2 of Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui shall be assigned
 3 eight positions each, and twelve positions shall
 4 be assigned to the city and county of Honolulu;
 5 and

6 (2) Other operating expenditures of the agricultural
 7 enforcement program established pursuant to section
 8 353C-A, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

9 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
 10 of law enforcement for the purposes of this Act.

11 SECTION 5. In codifying the new sections added by
 12 section 2 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute
 13 appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating
 14 the new sections in this Act.

15 SECTION 6. New statutory material is underscored.

16 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

17

INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 17 2025



H.B. NO. 501

Report Title:

DLE; Agricultural Enforcement Program; Theft of an Agricultural Product or Commodity; Agricultural Enforcement Special Fund; Positions; Appropriations

Description:

Establishes the Agricultural Enforcement Program within the Department of Law Enforcement. Establishes the Agricultural Enforcement Special Fund. Establishes positions. Appropriates funds.

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