

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 12 2025

RE: S.B. No. 523

S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Agriculture and Environment, to which was referred S.B. No. 523 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL BIOSECURITY,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Require the Department of Agriculture to establish and administer a Biosecurity Fencing Cost-Sharing Program (Program); and
- (2) Appropriate funds.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Agriculture; Hawai'i Farmers Union United; Hawai'i Farm Bureau; Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.; Kealia Ranch; and two individuals.

Your Committee finds that the spread of invasive species poses significant threats to Hawaii's agricultural viability, biosecurity, and ecosystems. Your Committee notes that local livestock and crop farms are particularly vulnerable to predation, crop damage, and disease transmission facilitated by these invasive species. Your Committee recognizes that although fencing is an effective method of invasive species management and biosecurity for native habitats and agricultural resources, it is



expensive to install. According to testimony received by your Committee, the cost-sharing framework of the Program proposed in this measure allows farmers statewide, regardless of the size of their farms, to safeguard their operations from invasive species and continue providing fresh, locally produced food to the communities of the State. Your Committee also notes that aligning the adoption of approved conservation plans with the Program's reimbursement rates not only protects farms from invasive species, but also incentivizes conservation practices that prioritize healthy soils, responsible water use, and long-term land stewardship. This measure addresses a critical barrier to farm viability while promoting meaningful conservation outcomes.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

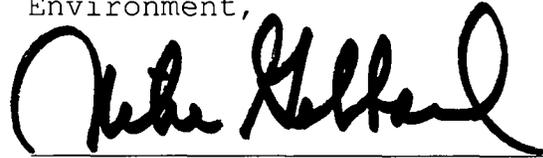
- (1) Changing the appropriation to an unspecified amount;
- (2) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2050, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

Your Committee notes that this measure, as amended, contains an unspecified appropriation amount. Should your Committee on Ways and Means choose to deliberate on this measure, your Committee respectfully requests that it consider inserting an appropriation amount of \$1,000,000 for the establishment of the Program.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture and Environment that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 523, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 523, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.



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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Gabbard", written over a horizontal line.

MIKE GABBARD, Chair



