

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 04 2025

RE: S.B. No. 552
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. 552 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Require the Department of Agriculture to establish a Healthy Soils Program; and
- (2) Appropriate \$500,000 for the establishment of the Program and to issue awards and other financial incentives pursuant to the Program.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission; Hawai'i Farm Bureau; Hawai'i Farmers Union United; Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management; Climate Protectors Hawaii; Green Party of Hawai'i; Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.; Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action; Citizens' Climate Lobby Hawai'i; Kanalani Ohana Farm; and thirty-five individuals.

Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Agriculture.



Your Committee finds that healthy soils are critical for the State to meet its local food production needs and, in the face of invasive pests and increasingly extreme climate events, a healthy soils program is necessary to ensure food security. This measure will provide necessary support to improve soil health and build soil carbon stocks in the State to increase resiliency.

Your Committee notes the concerns raised by the Department of Agriculture that this measure, in its current form, lacks guidance on the public and private collaboration necessary to establish the preferred farm management practice standards required and that the Department lacks the expertise and resources to establish and operate a responsible, transparent, and effective statewide science-based soil management and education program. Additionally, the objectives of the program may be duplicative. The Green House Gas Sequestration Task Force, established pursuant to section 225P-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is charged with, among other things, building healthy soils, sequestering carbon, increasing water-holding capacity, and increasing crop yields. Your Committee finds that these issues merit further consideration as this measure continues through the legislative process.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Changing the appropriation to an unspecified amount; and
- (2) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2050, to encourage further discussion.

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 \$500,000.

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. 552, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 552, 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,



MIKE GABBARD, Chair



