

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 04 2025

RE: S.B. No. 688  
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. 688 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to appropriate funds to establish three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) grant specialist positions within the Department of Agriculture to assist farmers and ranchers in applying for obtaining, and fulfilling the requirement of grants.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Agriculture; Hawai'i Farm Bureau; Ulupono Initiative; Hawai'i Farmers Union United; Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.; and one individual.

Your Committee finds that, in fiscal year 2025, the Department of Agriculture identified more than \$22 million in potential grant awards, ranging from agricultural innovation to water infrastructure to food systems developments. However, grant writing for federal, state, county, and other grants involve complex application processes that can be difficult to navigate, which may deter farmers and ranchers from pursuing these opportunities. Equipping the Department of Agriculture with sufficient staff to help eligible applicants pursue these funding opportunities is a proactive step in providing much needed support



to the State's agricultural community and has the potential to increase the State's local food production and self-sufficiency.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

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

Your Committee notes that testimony from the Department of Agriculture requests that the three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) grant specialist positions established in this measure be considered program specialist SR-24 level employees. Should your Committee on Ways and Means choose to deliberate on this measure, your Committee respectfully requests that it consider this designation.

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. 688, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 688, 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,



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MIKE GABBARD, Chair



The Senate  
 Thirty-Third Legislature  
 State of Hawai'i

**Record of Votes**  
**Committee on Agriculture and Environment**  
**AEN**

Bill / Resolution No.:*	Committee Referral:	Date:
SB688	AEN, WAM	1/27/25
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure. If so, then the previous decision was to: _____		
The Recommendation is:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Pass, unamended 2312 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pass, with amendments 2311 <input type="checkbox"/> Hold 2310 <input type="checkbox"/> Recommit 2313		
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)
Nay	Excused	
GABBARD, Mike (C)	<del>X</del>	
RICHARDS, III, Herbert M. "Tim" (VC)	<del>X</del>	
DECOITE, Lynn	<del>X</del>	
RHOADS, Karl	<del>X</del>	
AWA, Brenton	<del>X</del>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	5	
Recommendation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted		
Chair's or Designee's Signature: 		
Distribution:             Original             Yellow             Pink             Goldenrod File with Committee Report             Clerk's Office             Drafting Agency             Committee File Copy		

\*Only one measure per Record of Votes