

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA**

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson**

**Before the House Committee on
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**Wednesday, February 19, 2025
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224 and Via Videoconference**

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 1582
RELATING TO THE COCONUT TREE**

Senate Bill 1582 recognizes the coconut palm as an official, sustainable staple food source in the State. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure and offers the following comments.**

The niu (coconut palm) is a symbol of resilience and sustainability in Hawaiian culture, deeply interwoven with traditional practices, language, and daily life. Historically, coconut trees provided nourishment, medicine, building materials, and fiber for rope and weaving. Recognizing niu as a sustainable staple food source is a step toward restoring and revitalizing its importance in our communities.

Hawai'i imports approximately 85–90% of its food, making the state highly vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. Niu is a highly versatile and nutritious food source, offering coconut water, milk, meat, and oil—all of which can support local food production and reduce reliance on imported goods. Encouraging coconut cultivation will enhance food sovereignty and provide accessible, nutrient-rich options for island residents.

Niu is an iconic tree that contributes to Hawai'i's sense of place. As a drought- and salt-tolerant species, it plays a key role in coastal stabilization, erosion control, and carbon sequestration. By promoting the cultivation and protection of coconut trees, we reinforce the natural and cultural identity of Hawai'i while enhancing local sustainability efforts.

The Department's Division of Forestry and Wildlife has a Community Coconut Project within the Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program. The Community Coconut Project is dedicated to fostering "niu as a relationship rooted in community and aloha 'āina" and focuses on extending 'ike niu (coconut knowledge) to rejuvenate Hawaiian coconut resources, including the Uluniu system, the Hawaiian niu gene banking practice, within our Hawai'i communities. The project aligns with this bill.

Finally, Hawai'i acknowledges the coconut palm as more than just a crop—it is a sacred and vital resource that sustains our land, people, and cultural identity. This bill aligns with goals for food security, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of 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 19, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 1582
RELATING TO THE COCONUT TREE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

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 1582, which recognizes the coconut palm as a sustainable staple food source in Hawai'i. Coconut palms have long played a significant role in Hawaiian culture, agriculture, and food security, providing a wide range of edible and utilitarian products. By formally recognizing the coconut palm as a staple food source, this bill supports local farmers, encourages agricultural development, and promotes greater food self-sufficiency in the state.

Coconut production has the potential to contribute to Hawai'i's agricultural economy by creating new market opportunities for coconut-based products, including coconut water, oil, flour, and other value-added goods. The recognition of the coconut palm as a food source can also enhance its use in public health initiatives, food assistance programs, and sustainable agriculture policies.

However, while this bill highlights the importance of coconut as a food crop, the greatest threat to coconut palms in Hawai'i today is the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB). Since its detection in 2013, the CRB has rapidly spread, causing extensive damage to coconut and other palm species. The beetle burrows into the crowns of trees, weakening them, increasing their susceptibility to disease, and ultimately leading to tree death. If not controlled, CRB infestations will significantly impact coconut production, landscape aesthetics, and Hawai'i's overall ecosystem.

To fully realize the benefits of SB 1582, we strongly encourage additional investments in biosecurity funding and CRB eradication efforts. Without a coordinated and well-funded response, the continued spread of the beetle could devastate Hawai'i's coconut industry before it has the opportunity to expand. Strengthening pest management programs, enhancing monitoring and trapping efforts, and investing in biological control methods are essential steps to protecting Hawai'i's coconut palms.

We urge the committee to pass SB 1582 and to consider further support for biosecurity efforts to ensure that coconut remains a viable and sustainable food source for Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 3:17:01 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Kyser	Testifying for Kuahu Aina O Puna	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Kakou,

I Michael Kyser Jr, Board President of Kahu Aina O Puna a non-profit for the stewardship of Pohoiki, Issac Hale beach park and surrounding private land holders. As Kanaka having utilizing the many blessings the Niu has provided our ohana for many generations, it is reviered as the tree of life, Kupuna Niu.

We offically would like to support the SB1582 that Recognizes the coconut palm as an official, sustainable staple food source in the State.

Mahalo,

Michael KyserJr "Mikey"

Kahu Aina O Puna, Pres. mikeypu1980@gmail.com



Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

February 13, 2025

Testimony in Support of SB1582: Relating to the Coconut Tree

To: Chair Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Date: February 19, 2025

Time: 1:00 PM

Place: Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

From: The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i

Subject: Support for SB1582 - Recognizing the Coconut Palm as an Official, Sustainable Staple Food Source in the State

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment,

The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i proudly supports SB1582, which recognizes the coconut palm as an official, sustainable staple food source in the State of Hawai'i.

Key Points:

1. **Cultural Significance:** The coconut palm is a symbol of Hawai'i's tropical heritage and has sustained our ancestors for generations.
2. **Nutritional Value:** The coconut palm provides a nutritious and versatile food source, contributing to food security.
3. **Environmental Benefits:** The coconut palm is well-suited to Hawai'i's climate, requiring minimal inputs and supporting sustainable agriculture.
4. **Economic Impact:** Recognizing the coconut palm encourages local cultivation, benefiting farmers and the local economy.

Arguments in Support:

Cultural Significance: The coconut palm holds great cultural significance in Hawai'i. It is not only a symbol of our tropical paradise but also an integral part of our heritage. By recognizing the coconut palm as an official staple food source, we honor the traditions and practices of our ancestors who relied on this versatile and valuable resource.

Nutritional Value: Coconuts are rich in essential nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats. They can be used to produce a wide range of food products such as coconut milk, oil, and water, which are beneficial to our health. Encouraging the consumption and cultivation of coconuts can enhance the nutritional well-being of our communities.

Environmental Benefits: The coconut palm is ideally suited to Hawai'i's climate and soil conditions, making it a sustainable crop that requires minimal water and chemical inputs. Unlike other crops that may deplete resources and harm the environment, the coconut palm supports eco-friendly agricultural practices. Promoting its cultivation aligns with our commitment to preserving natural resources and promoting environmental sustainability.

Economic Impact: Recognizing the coconut palm as a staple food source can boost the local economy by supporting farmers who cultivate coconuts. By fostering a market for locally grown coconuts, we reduce our reliance on imported foods and create economic opportunities for our agricultural sector. This measure can strengthen our food system and contribute to a resilient and self-sufficient economy.

We believe that SB1582 will not only honor our cultural heritage but also pave the way for a more sustainable and resilient food system in Hawai'i. We urge the Committee to pass this measure and recognize the coconut palm as an official, sustainable staple food source in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB1582.

Sincerely,

Melodie Aduja and Alan Burdick, Co-chairs, Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i

**Testimony of
LEILA KEALOHA,
Executive Director of Pōhaku Pelemaka 501(c) 3 nonprofit**

**Before the
State of Hawaii
The Senate
Thirty-Third Legislature, 2025
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street**

**HONOLULU, Hawaii
FEBRUARY 19, 2025
1: 00 P. M.**

**In consideration of
SB 1582
RELATING TO THE COCONUT TREE
Recognizes the coconut palm as an official, sustainable staple food source in the
State.**

Aloha Kākou,

My name is Leila Kealoha and I am submitting my testimony in support of SB 1582 which would recognize the “Niu” or coconut as an official, sustainable food source in the State. I would like to share that I am from Puna makai on Hawaii island. We have an abundance of niu in our area.

I grew up on coconut. This “food source” has been a part of our diet since I was born and has been a part of my ancestors diet for generations. This important resource deserves attention in great caliber. We not only use it for food, yet for cultural practices, crafts, shelter, decor and much more. Our culture has seen the decline and ignorance of this important tree being identified as a “Resource.”

I also work in an area where we are collecting data on our uluniu or Coconut grove. We believe in the preservation of this resource and the “rare” varieties that it possesses to our culture and our people. We are major advocates for the niu and all that it has to offer our people and in return our care for it or “Malama i ka niu”, take care of the coconut.

I highly encourage the senate to pass this bill to acknowledge the significance of this special tree and resource. Kupu ka niu, Kupu ke kanaka “When coconuts grow, humanity flourishes.”

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

Leila Kealoha

Leila Kealoha, Executive Director

Pōhaku Pelemaka

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 9:09:31 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Pieper	Testifying for Hanai Kaiaulu	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mikala Pieper, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB1582, which recognizes the coconut tree as a sustainable staple food source in Hawai‘i. As a native of Wai‘anae, an educator, and the director of a non-profit dedicated to environmental stewardship and cultural preservation, I have seen firsthand the devastating impact of the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) infestation on our old-growth niu groves, some of which have stood for generations, planted by our kūpuna.

The coconut tree is not just a tree—it is a living connection to our heritage, our survival, and our identity. For too long, contemporary colonization has disconnected us from this tree of life. Instead of being valued for its traditional uses, niu has been relegated to an ornamental liability, a neglected part of our landscape rather than the sustainable resource it once was. But our kūpuna knew its worth. Every part of the coconut tree—its fruit, leaves, husk, and trunk—was used for food, medicine, shelter, tools, and ceremony.

If we do not act now, we risk losing not only the trees but also the invaluable knowledge tied to them. The more the CRB infestation spreads, the further we are severed from this essential part of our culture. If we lose the niu, our hands will forget how to weave, our sacred ceremonies will fade away, and our keiki will never learn the deep cultural significance of this tree.

We must restore the niu to its rightful place in our daily lives, not just as a tree in our environment, but as a vital food source and symbol of resilience. Recognizing the coconut palm as a sustainable staple food source will open opportunities for local food production, economic growth, and agricultural sustainability. More importantly, it will ensure that our keiki learn about this tree in our schools, our communities, and our homes—so that they understand not only its nutritional value but also its cultural and environmental significance.

Now is the time to take action before we lose the last of the trees planted by our ancestors. Let us honor, celebrate, and protect the niu for future generations.

Mahalo for your time and consideration. I urge you to pass SB1582 and stand in solidarity with our communities who are fighting to preserve this irreplaceable resource.

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,
Hānai Kaiāulu, 501c3, Wai‘anae, HI



February 18, 2025

To: Chair Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Herbert Richards, and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Subject: SB1582, Relating to The Coconut Tree

Aloha,

I am submitting testimony in **support** of **SB1582** that recognizes the coconut palm as an official, sustainable staple food source.

[Niu is currently known as an “ornamental tree” and is considered to be a liability in Hawai’i.](#) This status forces our coconut palms to no longer be recognized as a food source yet be an exotic symbol to attract tourists.

Niu plays a huge part in Hawaii – it connects people to one another through a food source, aids in ecosystem, Planetary, nutrition, and human health, and exhibits global indigenous values and principles. Hence, Niu is known as “the tree of life.”

[Niu is renowned for its rich nutritional value.](#) Niu contributes to heart health, muscle health, cognitive functions, digestive health, regulating blood sugar, provides probiotics, and is packed with vitamins that support immunity. Niu is used as an alternative for dietary restrictions and to enhance current or other dietary preferences. Niu is also sustainable in utilizing our natural resources such as land and water. Niu utilizes land use with efficiency as its natural habitat is within diverse tropical ecosystems. Coconut cultivation requires less water compared to other food production methods.

As our global population is expected to reach 10 billion people by 2050 and we continue to develop dietary patterns that balance nutrition and sustainability for the health of our Planet, it is imperative that we find plant based food sources that are versatile, nutritious, and diverse.

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai’i communities.

In 2025, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/15/13/9937>

<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/full/10.1021/acs.jafc.3c09838>



In conclusion, if this bill is coupled with sustainable practices in niu agriculture or processing for coconut as a sustainable staple food source (i.e. prevention of expansion into protected and sensitive ecosystems, safe working conditions), this can ensure viability and vitality of this measure.

I urge the committee to pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this issue.

Mahalo,
Lea iaea & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

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<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/15/13/9937>
<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/full/10.1021/acs.jafc.3c09838>

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 9:30:56 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jesse Kealiinohomoku	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Kākou,

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 1582 - Hawaii imports over 85% percent of our food annually. Individually creating a great deal of reliance on these imported goods for any household living in Hawaii. Simply put - Niu is considered the tree of life throughout the pacific. Given its name, the Niu is equivalent to our modern day hardware store when it comes to the resources yielded from its trunk, frond and fruit. Moreover the fruit, flower and husk provides sustenance and medicine. As we move forward towards building food system resilience through pae‘āina we must not forget that the Niu holds a crucial role buidling ‘āina momona once again.

Mahalo,

Jesse Mikasobe-Kealiinohomoku

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 5:00:56 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/26/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire	Testifying for Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands H.I.	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Dear Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

I enthusiastically endorse S.B. No. 1582, a transformative bill designating the coconut palm (cocos nucifera, or niu) as a sustainable staple food source in Hawaii. This Polynesian canoe plant, a lifeline for ancient Hawaiians, offers unparalleled potential to slash our \$3 billion food import bill (DBEDT, 2024), grow a \$10 million industry into \$100 million (FAO projection), and fortify cultural resilience. From food and cosmetics to cordage and construction, its ancient uses inspire modern innovation—yet the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) looms as a dire threat. Below, I outline my support and propose amendments with robust funding, advanced CRB strategies, and key agency roles, including DOLE, to make this a reality. Mahalo for your leadership!

Support for S.B. No. 1582

- Ancient Wisdom, Modern Gold: Early Hawaiians relied on niu for sustenance—meat and water as food, oil for skin and hair, shells for cups and spoons, husks for ropes, leaves for mats and thatch, trunks for canoes and homes (Malo, Hawaiian Antiquities, 1898). Today, these fuel a \$31 billion global market (Statista, 2023): water (\$6 billion), oil (\$5 billion), coir (\$1 billion), and lumber. Hawaii’s 100,000 palms (HDOA, 2023) could yield 5-8 million coconuts yearly—\$10-\$16 million at \$2/nut (UH CTAHR, 2023).
- Food Security Imperative: Importing 85% of our food (DBEDT, 2024), Hawaii needs local staples. One coconut offers 140-200 calories and 1 liter of water (USDA, 2022); 100,000 trees could feed 10% of our 1.4 million residents daily for a month (extrapolated). This bill aligns with HRS §226-7’s self-sufficiency mandate.
- Economic Engine: With 42,000 ag jobs (DBEDT, 2024), coconut expansion could add 5,000 more (UH estimate), mirroring Fiji’s 20% growth post-policy (\$50 million, FAO, 2022). Recognition kickstarts this, honoring Native Hawaiian ingenuity.

Proposed Amendments to Maximize Effectiveness

- Amendment 1: Launch a Coconut Innovation and Development Program
 - Current Issue: Symbolic status lacks action—70% of palms are wild, not farmed (HDOA, 2023), missing modern uses like coir and oil.
 - Proposal: Add §141-X: “The Department of Agriculture (DOA), with \$15 million for FY 2025-2026, shall establish a Coconut Innovation and Development

Program. Grants, training, and R&D will target food (water, meat), cosmetics (oil), textiles (coir), and construction (lumber, mats). DOLE shall enforce compliance with 5 FTE inspectors.”

- Data/Support: Ancient cordage from husks matches a \$1 billion coir market (Statista, 2023); 500 tons from 100,000 trees = \$250,000. Oil, used for hair, hits \$5 billion globally—\$15 million could triple our 200 coconut farms (HDOA), adding \$10 million in revenue (UH CTAHR). DOLE’s 2024 sting success (50+ trafficking busts) proves enforcement chops.
- Amendment 2: Embed Coconut Products in State Systems
 - Current Issue: No integration exists—15% of residents are food insecure (Feeding America, 2023), and housing costs soar (\$50 million/year, HCDCH, 2023).
 - Proposal: Add §141-Y: “DOH, DHS, and DOE, with \$5 million, shall integrate coconut water (hydration), meat (nutrition), and oil (health) into SNAP, school lunches, and clinics. DLNR shall use leaf mats and trunk lumber for 1,000 affordable homes, overseen by DOLE.”
 - Data/Support: Coconut water rivals sports drinks (USDA, 2022); 140,000 SNAP users (DHS HI, 2024) could save \$20 million in imports. Ancient thatch lasted 10 years (DLNR)—1,000 homes at \$10,000/unit cuts costs 20%. DOLE ensures quality, per its 2024 regulatory role.
- Amendment 3: Triple Tax Credits for Coconut Enterprises
 - Current Issue: Only 1,000 of 1.9 million farmland acres grow coconuts (HDOA, 2023)—incentives are nil.
 - Proposal: Add §235-Z: “Farmers, processors, and artisans producing coconut products (food, oil, coir, lumber, shell crafts) receive a \$3,000/acre credit, up to \$60,000/year, for 10 years.”
 - Data/Support: \$3,000/acre could add 5,000 acres (\$15 million cost), yielding 250,000 coconuts (\$500,000) and 500 tons coir (\$250,000). Florida’s \$500/acre grew citrus 25% (USDA, 2022)—Hawaii could hit 50%, adding \$25 million (UH).
- Amendment 4: Aggressive CRB Eradication Task Force
 - Current Issue: CRB kills 10% of Oahu’s 10,000 palms yearly (HDOA, 2024)—1,000 lost in 2023 threaten \$2 million in nuts. Current traps catch only 50% (USDA-ARS, 2023).
 - Proposal: Add §141-W: “DOA, DLNR, and DOLE, with \$10 million for FY 2025-2026, shall form a CRB Eradication Task Force. Tactics: (1) 20,000 pheromone traps (\$2 million, 75% efficacy, UH CTAHR); (2) Oryctes virus (\$3 million, 70% kill rate); (3) drone spraying (\$2 million, 80% coverage, UH); (4) \$1,000/tree bounties (\$2 million); (5) \$100/tree public reporting (\$1 million). DOLE deploys 10 FTE officers for enforcement.”
 - Data/Support: CRB costs \$5 million/year (HDOA); Guam’s trap-virus combo cut 60% of beetles (USDA-ARS, 2022). Saving 5,000 trees = \$10 million in nuts. DOLE’s 2024 pest patrols (50+ citations) ensure compliance.
- Amendment 5: Robust Education and Cultural Revival Campaign
 - Current Issue: Only 10% of residents use coconut products (UH CTAHR, 2023); 50% of youth don’t know niu’s uses (OHA, 2023).

- Proposal: Add §141-V: “DOA and DOE, with \$5 million, shall launch a campaign on coconut uses—food, oil cosmetics, coir ropes, shell tools, leaf mats—via schools, media, and cultural festivals. OHA co-leads to preserve Hawaiian knowledge.”
- Data/Support: Samoa’s \$1 million campaign raised use 30% (FAO, 2021); 1.4 million residents (U.S. Census, 2023) could add \$1 million in demand. Shell crafts tap a \$1 billion market (Statista). OHA’s 2023 cultural programs reached 10,000 youth.
- Amendment 6: Fortify Coconut Palm Protection and Mapping
 - Current Issue: 10% of 70,000 wild palms lost since 2010 (DLNR, 2023)—no inventory exists.
 - Proposal: Add §141-U: “DLNR, with \$3 million, shall map 100,000 palms in 18 months, designating them protected. Removal permits via DLNR; violations fined \$5,000/tree. DOLE enforces with 5 FTE officers.”
 - Data/Support: Mapping secures 5-8 million coconuts (\$10-\$16 million). Florida’s \$1,000 fines saved 15% of palms (FL DACS, 2023)—\$5,000 reflects Hawaii’s \$5 million CRB loss. DOLE’s 2024 enforcement capacity ensures teeth.

Closing

S.B. No. 1582 celebrates niu’s ancient gifts—sustenance, beauty, craft, and shelter—while igniting a modern revolution. With \$38 million, advanced CRB tactics, and DOLE, DOA, DLNR, DHS, DOE, and OHA united, it slashes imports, builds a \$100 million industry, and saves 100,000 trees from beetles. Pass it with these amendments to honor our ancestors and feed our future. Mahalo—I’m committed to seeing this soar!

Sincerely,

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire

Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands H.i.

Ke Aupuni o Ko Hawai'i Pae Aina

Written Testimony:
SB1582 RELATING TO THE COCONUT TREE

Aloha,

My name is Momi and I am in support of having the coconut tree as a sustainable staple food source for Hawai'i Nei. I am a native to O'ahu, Hawai'i and throughout my childhood I have viewed the coconut tree as a provider. A provider of various benefits that has not only supported humans, but also the ecosystem. Throughout its lifespan, the coconut tree can provide countless nutrients that strengthen the human body, whether it is consumed or applied to the skin. It is medicinal and has the ability to treat negative health conditions of humans as well as animals. Furthermore, the body of a coconut tree can be transformed into various tools to enhance our survival and ways of living. Its roots could be utilized as dye, mouthwash, or a toothbrush. Its trunk could be used to build furniture, houses, canoes, or drums. Its leaves could be used as brooms, mats, cooking skewers, and more. Its shell and husk could be utilized as fuel or mosquito repellant when burned. These are just to name a few.

On the other hand, the coconut tree has supported the ecosystem by absorbing carbon dioxide, preventing soil erosion, fostering biodiversity, stabilizing sandy soils, and is a vital source for oxygen. Personally, I have consumed coconut water to rebuild my body when weak or dehydrated. I drink it daily and also give it to my daughter as a source of nutrition. I believe in the power and healing properties it provides. Overall, I am in support of the coconut tree finally getting its recognition in becoming a sustainable staple for Hawai'i. Mahalo for your time.

Blessings,

Momi

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 12:51:22 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Otis Aisek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha and ran annim, distinguished members:

My name is Otis Aisek. I am a Micronesian citizen (FSM) and habitual resident of the State of Hawaii. My son is a US citizen, born and currently residing in Oahu.

As a father and uncle to many future voters of the state of Hawaii, I advocate for the passing of bill SB1582.

SB1582, or the coconut tree bill, aims to “recognize the coconut palm as a sustainable staple food source in Hawaii.”

I understand the value of having sustainable resources and what better resource than the coconut tree? “The tree of life”.

Along with the many agricultural and environmental benefits that this bill presents, I think it’s also important to highlight the cultural and traditional benefits that the coconut tree can provide. As people of Oceania, we have a shared history when it comes to the coconut tree. Teaching the many traditional uses of the coconut tree can empower traditional knowledge and strengthen ties between Pacific peoples.

Once again, I advocate for the passing of SB1582.

Mahalo nui loa - Kinisou chapwur

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 9:37:21 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jan K Baldado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I SUPPORT SB 1582, recognizing the coconut palm as a sustainable staple food source in Hawai'i.

Mahalo.

Jan Baldado

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 11:45:30 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kallie Barnes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Kākou,

It is important, now more than ever, that we protect and recognize the importance of coconuts as a food, fiber and cultural resource. With the establishment of coconut rhinoceros beetle on O'ahu, our resources need to focus on preventing the spread of this invasive species. Only if we recognize the significance of coconut and take up the responsibility to protect this plant will we be able to be successful in our efforts. Food sovereignty for Hawai'i should be of the utmost importance due to our geographical location.

Mahalo,

Kallie Barnes

Hawai'i Island Resident

Master Food Preserver

Conservationist

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 1:19:08 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelsey Amos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please recognize niu, thank you

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 11:59:13 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Koki Atcheson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and members of the Committee on Agriculture and the Environment,

My name is Koki Atcheson and I am an O'ahu resident writing as an individual in strong support of SB 1582. Recognition of niu as a staple agricultural crop in the ways described in the bill (water, food, oil, cordage, wood, weaving material and more) is a timely step to align with community needs. Through public engagement efforts of Niu Now and coconut experts, I have deepened my understanding of the multifaceted value of niu and the ability of these trees to sustain people and culture. Codifying the status of niu as a sustainable staple food source will create opportunity for community and economic development, and simply makes sense. Thank you for the initiative in taking this step to support local communities and agriculture!

With sincere aloha,

Koki

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 1:12:17 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Miguel Castrence	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Even though coconut palms grow well here, most of the coconut products we consume in Hawai'i are imported. We need to shift back to valuing coconut palms as more than just an ornamental plant. It is not only a sustainable food source; it has more uses than any other tree in the world. Please support SB1582!

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 8:58:00 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/26/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lana Bilbo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Niu is and has been a staple crop for hundreds of years in Hawaii. Our relationship to it as an appropriate and sustainable food source has been severed by foreign imports from outside of Hawaii, and our unhealthy and dangerous reliance on these imports. Please recognize Niu as the important staple crop it is for Hawaii.

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:28:14 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/26/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aaron Daniel Motuki Herefenua Drake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Tuki Drake and I am in favor of SB1582.

Cocos Nucifera, Niu, is the Pacific’s “Tree of Life” and is a vital yet underutilized and underappreciated kupuna crop here in Hawai‘i Nei.

Every part of the coconut tree was valuable and useful to Pacific Peoples. With the sennit derived from the coconut husks we lashed our ocean-going canoes. The meat is food. The milk and water, nourishment. The oil for health and preservation. The fronds for weaving roofing, hats, fans and more. The wood for carving and building. Niu is far more than an ornamental liability and deserves to be acknowledged as a staple food crop that will bolster Hawai‘i’s resilience, both in terms of food sovereignty and direct economic benefit.

In 2023, French Polynesia, Mā’ohi Nui, exported approximately \$3.65M in coconut oil products to global markets. Fiji exported \$2.4M, Samoa exported \$7.85M, Sri Lanka \$65.9M, Papua New Guinea exported \$124M, Philippines exported \$243M, and Indonesia exported a staggering \$2.54B. Meanwhile, in the same year, the United States imported \$1.05B worth of coconut oil making it the world’s largest importer of coconut derived products (<https://oec.world>). Using global coconut oil exports alone, we can clearly see the incredible potential that Hawai‘i could have in this robust market.

SB1582 presents a critical first step in really reengaging with the “Tree of Life” for the sake of Hawai‘i’s future generations.

Mahalo.

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:44:14 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/26/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marla Tomorug	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Marla Tomorug, and I am writing to express my strong support for the recognition of Niu (coconut palms; *Cocos nucifera*) as an official sustainable staple food source in the State of Hawai‘i. As a plant that has nourished communities for generations, Niu holds cultural, nutritional, and environmental significance that aligns with Hawai‘i’s values of sustainability, resilience, and self-sufficiency.

Known as the “tree of life,” Niu offers numerous benefits that extend beyond its role as a food source. Its versatility provides essential nutrients, healthy fats, and hydration, making it a key component of a balanced diet. Additionally, every part of the tree can be used, from the coconut fruit to its leaves, fibers, and wood, supporting a circular, zero-waste approach to resource use. This aligns with the global need for sustainable food systems as our population approaches 10 billion by 2050.

Niu also plays a vital role in Hawai‘i’s cultural heritage, serving as a symbol of connection, community, and stewardship of the land. By recognizing Niu as a sustainable staple food source, the State of Hawai‘i not only honors its cultural legacy but also reinforces its commitment to supporting regenerative agriculture and food sovereignty. This recognition can help strengthen local food systems, reduce dependence on imported goods, and promote practices that are both environmentally and economically sustainable.

As climate change continues to impact our food systems, it is essential to prioritize resilient crops that thrive in diverse climates. Niu’s adaptability to Hawai‘i’s environment makes it a key resource in building food security and ensuring long-term agricultural sustainability. By officially recognizing Niu, Hawai‘i has the opportunity to lead by example, demonstrating the importance of indigenous knowledge and plant-based food systems in addressing global challenges.

I urge you to support this initiative and recognize Niu for its invaluable contributions to the people and environment of Hawai‘i. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued dedication to the well-being of our communities and ecosystems.

Mahalo,
Marla

SB-1582

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 9:38:58 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/26/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Klayton Kubo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support