THE SENATE
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026
STATE OF HAWAII

S.B. NO. 2320 S.D. 1

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

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

SECTION 1. The State's food system depends on cultivating a skilled, culturally grounded, and resilient agricultural workforce. While Hawaii imports over eighty per cent of its food, the State faces a shortage of young farmers and agriculture professionals. These issues have led to stress for small farms to scale up production, which is only exacerbated by a weak workforce pipeline required for sustainable growth in the State's agricultural sector.

The legislature further finds that Connecticut's Agricultural Science and Technology Education program, which provides high school students with hands-on technical training, certifications, and direct job placement in a variety of agriculture-related fields through its regional centers, has demonstrated measurable success in building agricultural career pathways. California has also launched the California AgTech Alliance to establish a statewide platform to connect research, industry, and farmers in a more coordinated way through its nine

regional innovation hubs by deploying cutting-edge technology and training the next generation of agricultural workers, ensuring that farms of all sizes, especially small- and mid-scale operations, have access to the tools and partnerships that keep them productive and sustainable. The State has a unique opportunity to adapt this proven regional hub model into a culturally grounded, island-specific career pathway system that integrates Native Hawaiian agriculture, regenerative practices, aquaculture, agroforestry, and entrepreneurship.

The legislature concludes that implementing a kuleana agtech pathways program is a matter of statewide concern pursuant to article X, section 6, of the Hawaii State Constitution.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a kuleana agtech pathways program in the university of Hawaii system as a statewide initiative to prepare the State's youth for meaningful careers in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology.

SECTION 2. Chapter 304A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to subpart B of part I to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§304A- **Kuleana agtech pathways program; established.** (a) There is established a kuleana agtech pathways program to create clear, supported career pipelines in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology in the State.

(b) The university of Hawaii shall work in conjunction with the department of education, department of agriculture and biosecurity, agribusiness development corporation, department of labor and industrial relations, and appropriate community organizations or entities to develop and administer the program.

(c) The program shall:

(1) Expand agricultural science and technology into career and technical education programs in public high schools and the university of Hawaii system;

(2) Fund the professional development and establishment of positions, including educators and career coordinators, dedicated to sustaining program quality;

(3) Establish internship and apprenticeship opportunities with farms, other businesses, and organizations for program participants;

(4) Establish dual credit opportunities for program participants pursuant to sections 302A-401 and 304A-803;

(5) Train program participants in climate-smart farming, cultural stewardship, geographic information systems, drone operations, hydroponics, and entrepreneurship;

(6) Establish an agtech regional hub in at least one public high school or university of Hawaii system campus in each county that provides program participants with education that aligns with each county's agricultural needs and day-to-day coordination with local farmers, other businesses, and organizations providing internships and apprenticeship opportunities; and

(7) Establish a tiered certification system in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology at the high school and community college levels.

(d) The university of Hawaii shall submit annual reports of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of each regular session."

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the establishment and administration of the kuleana agtech pathways program.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the university of Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.

S.B. NO. 2320 S.D. 1

Report Title:
UH; DOE; DAB; ADC; DLIR; Farmers; Agricultural Careers; Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program; Regional Hubs; Reports; Appropriation

Description:
Establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program to create career pipelines in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology. Requires the University of Hawaii to collaborate with the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Agribusiness Development Corporation, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and appropriate community organizations to develop and administer the program. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

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