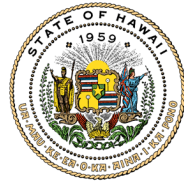


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI A KIA'I MEAOLA
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9560 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026
3:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1572, HD2
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards and Wakai, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1572, HD2. The bill requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to: (1) Establish a four-year Restorative Aquaculture Development Program to reduce aquaculture permit processing time, support aquaculture infrastructure expansion, increase the aquaculture workforce, and pursue federal aquaculture grants; (2) Establish three pilot demonstration sites for restorative aquaculture; and (3) Convene a Restorative Aquaculture Advisory Council. Requires reports to the Legislature. It also appropriates funds. The DAB supports this measure.

HB1572, HD2 addresses Hawaii's critical food security challenge while delivering measurable environmental outcomes. Hawaii currently imports more than 90 percent of its seafood, creating vulnerability to supply chain disruptions. Restorative aquaculture, operations that demonstrably improve environmental conditions alongside food production, provides a direct pathway to increase local supply. The bill specifies quantified targets: restoration of 200 acres of coastal habitat, water quality improvement demonstrations in three sites, and 2,500 tons of annual carbon dioxide sequestration by 2030. These are not aspirational goals but operational metrics tied to federal monitoring protocols. Native species production, fish and seaweed, generates local food while supporting cultural restoration and ecosystem services that benefit all Hawaiian communities.

HB1572, HD2 creates 250 direct jobs and establishes workforce development infrastructure for Hawaii's blue economy. The bill prioritizes Native Hawaiian practitioners and small-scale producers by dedicating 25 percent of infrastructure and workforce funding to these communities, removing long-standing barriers to participation. Shared hatchery facilities, aggregation infrastructure, and coordinated permitting reduce capital and regulatory barriers that currently prevent commercial operations from reaching scale. Apprenticeship and training programs ensure accessible career pathways in rural communities where economic opportunity is limited. The \$10 million federal grant strategy leverages outside investment without proportional state budget exposure, multiplying the impact of appropriated resources.

Federal recognition of Hawaii's restorative aquaculture potential demonstrates market validation and funding partnership. In January 2026, Congress appropriated \$500,000 directly to the Hawaii DAB for a regenerative aquaculture feasibility study - explicitly validating the ADP's strategic direction and the policy framework in this bill. This federal earmark was part of a broader \$5.275 million aquaculture and marine resource investment package, signaling bipartisan federal commitment to Hawaii aquaculture development. HB1572, HD2 operationalizes this federal support through specific performance objectives: reducing permit processing to 12-15 months, establishing 25 new operations, restoring 15 traditional fishponds, and pursuing additional federal competitive grants from NOAA, USDA, NSF, and the Department of Energy. Independent third-party evaluation by December 2027 ensures program effectiveness and accountability. The restorative aquaculture advisory council, comprising industry operators, environmental experts, Hawaiian practitioners, research institutions, and government agencies, provides transparent governance preventing the permitting delays and inter-agency conflicts that have historically undermined Hawaii's aquaculture ventures. This bill demonstrates professional program management, rigorous evaluation, and strategic federal partnership aligned with national aquaculture development priorities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
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. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
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CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the Senate Committees on
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
and
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Wednesday, March 25, 2026
3:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1572, HOUSE DRAFT 2
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

House Bill 1572, House Draft 2 proposes to require the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to: (1) Establish a Restorative Aquaculture Development Program to reduce aquaculture permit processing time, support aquaculture infrastructure expansion, increase the aquaculture workforce, and pursue federal aquaculture grants; (2) Establish three pilot demonstration sites for restorative aquaculture; and (3) Convene a Restorative Aquaculture Advisory Council. It also requires reports to the Legislature and appropriates funds. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure and provides the following comments.**

The Department has long implemented and supported restorative aquaculture work, including native species propagation, restoration of traditional aquaculture systems, and indigenous knowledge-based resource management through direct management, applied research, community partnerships, and technical assistance. To ensure effectiveness and continuity of ongoing efforts, any new programs or advisory councils established under this measure should complement existing departmental roles rather than duplicate or supplant them. Therefore, the Department stands ready to consult with DAB as it establishes and implements the restorative aquaculture development program and pilot demonstration sites and pursues federal grant funding.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
and
Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
Wednesday, March 25 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

By
Darren T. Lerner, PhD
Director, Sea Grant College Program,
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology
and
Vassilis L. Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1572 HD2 – RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT.

Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards and Wakai, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) supports with comments HB 1572 HD2 relating to aquaculture development.

Aquaculture development is a vital step in improving Hawai'i food systems by increasing the amount of food grown in-State and reducing the dependency on food import. The establishment of an aquaculture restorative development program, as proposed, will increase the profitability and commercial output of Hawaii's aquaculture system in sustainable means, specifically through an advisory council that will pursue federal funds for aquaculture development, as well as through revitalization and novel creation of restorative aquaculture operations. This bill increases the capacity of the State to support aquaculture development, which is an important step in both reversing the decreases in the State's aquaculture industry over the last decade, and expanding Hawai'i's food security. However, the bill does not expressly state what percentage, if any, of food generated within the restorative aquaculture program is to be sold within the state. This lack of clarity leaves legal ambiguity for exportation of locally generated food, and without specific implementation guidelines, the bill may fall short in its intended purpose to improve food security in Hawai'i.

Improvements of local agriculture, including through sustainable aquaculture development, are avenues to both retain and expand the local economy structures through aquaculture production, job creation, and economic viability analysis. The proposed bill will expand aquaculture Hawai'i through multiple means to increase agricultural profits, as well as expand the job market and associated career paths in

aquaculture and related value-chain sectors, especially in rural areas and underserved communities. Furthermore, over the last decade, aquaculture profits have declined, and the proposed bill has potential to reverse these profit margins by demonstrating economic viability of restorative aquaculture through production metrics, market development, and value-chain analysis supporting long-term private sector participation.

The Hawai'i Sea Grant would happily work in collaboration with the proposed Restorative Aquaculture Advisory Council on restorative aquaculture in Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

In support of HB 1572 HD2

Aloha, esteemed Senators in the Agriculture and Environment and Economic and Development and Tourism Committees please pass HB 1572.

Thanks, Ron Tubbs B.S.N.D. UHM

Please support Sustainable Aquarium Fisheries, Aquaculture Facilities, and the incredible, amazing science discovered from these activities!

Activists from snorkeling and tourism groups, who oppose Aquarium Fishing, also oppose ALL Public Aquariums and Aquaculture!

“SHUT DOWN FOR ALL AQUARIUMS IS THEIR UNRELENTING STANCE”

These same activists have attacked, successfully shut down, or affected operations of: Ecoharvest Kona, Kanaloa Octopus Farm, Maui Ocean Center, Sea Life Park, Petco Maui, Aquariums in Restaurants, and facilities both nationally and worldwide.

An unrelenting propaganda campaign by activists in the name of perverted ecology, lacking sound scientific support, has attacked Eco Harvest and the Special Activity Permit (SAP) Issuance, resulting in the loss of over a million dollars invested by Eco Harvest. With no new permit granted to collect healthy broodstock, the breeding facility failed!

“When Eco Harvest was denied the SAP permit due to anti-aquarium-fishery propaganda, they went belly up”.

News article: “From a fishery perspective, we are disheartened”.

<https://www.coralmagazine.com/2023/09/29/coral-excerpt-ecoharvest-hawaii-big-plans-on-the-big-island/>

I supplied legally, at great expense and effort, through a Legal SAP permit process with DAR DLNR collection of broodstock for the Eco Harvest Aquaculture permits in 2022.

Special Activity Permit SAP No. 2023-05 Application No. 2878 Department of Land & Natural Resources DIVISION OF AQUATIC RESOURCES Date Issued: February 10, 2022.

The permit was fulfilled under the watchful eye of DLNR enforcement and collection from multiple locations to reduce impacts.

Our highly regulated legal collection was immediately met with opposition from Kona activists and in news articles. Complaints were filed and threats made by these groups.

Biota support of OI Facility investors from out of state are in trouble, not from the Aquarium Fishery Permit Issuance but from the anti-aquarium fishery propaganda! NOAA funding has dried up too, and they are seeking new investments to keep going.

Currently, in Hawaii, marine fish aquaculture is not a proven scientific path for the aquarium fishery! The Aquarium fishery, through SAP permits, continues to support tropical ornamental aquaculture!

NOAA Funding: The [Oceanic Institute of Hawai'i Pacific University \(HPU\)](#) has received significant grants for restorative aquaculture and to address environmental challenges.

ECOHARVEST invested millions and failed; they went down quickly despite their expertise and SAP permits, with support from local Aquarium Fishers. Permits and denials also played a part. Constant fresh broodstock is key to the success of tropical fish aquaculture.

Anti-Aquarium Fishery Activists who own or profit from Tourism Businesses oppose Public Aquariums and Aquaculture!

Jun 9, 2023 — This *permit* is issued, subject to the general and special conditions, for the collection and possession of regulated organisms. (*yellow tang* / ...
Missing: ~~ecoharvest~~ | Show results with: [ecoharvest](#)

<https://www.reef2reef.com › threads › post-14223475>

Maui Ocean Center touts marine conservation, but the nonprofit says it repeatedly violates fish-taking permits with high mortality rates.

<https://mauiNOW.com/2024/12/15/maui-ocean-center-touts-marine-conservation-but-nonprofit-says-it-repeatedly-violates-fish-taking-permits-with-high-mortality-rates/>

But the [nonprofit For the Fishes](#), which conducts courtesy reviews of fish-taking permits for the state, said it has found that the Maui Ocean Center has repeatedly violated these annual permits over the years, and that the state has allowed them to do so with minimal consequences.

For the Fishes Director Rene Umberger said the nonprofit's compliance review of the ocean center's [2022-23 special activity permit](#) determined there were 91 instances of improper collection from the ocean, including 11 the state also identified. The collected wildlife also experienced a mortality rate of more than 50% within a year of capture, she said.

But instead of the Division of Aquatic Resources cracking down on the center — and addressing the 118 recommendations made by the nonprofit to deal with the collection issues — the state agency in June renewed the ocean center’s permit. And, it did so with more favorable conditions, Umberger said.

[This year’s permit](#) more than doubled the allowable fish collection to 1,381 — the largest permit of its kind in the state — after a one-year gap in renewal during 2023-24, which the Division of Aquatic Resources attributed to a backlog.

The permit also included a new “opportunistic collection” clause that allows Maui Ocean Center to collect non-regulated marine life without prior permission and seek approval afterward. These activities would otherwise be illegal, according to the Division of Aquatic Resources.

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<https://weanimals.org/2023/09/08/octopus-farm-closes-following-investigation/>

Kanaloa Octopus Farm on the Big Island of Hawaii has now [permanently closed](#) after the state decided not to renew the facility’s lease. This huge victory comes after months of pressure from animal advocates, media exposure and legal complaints in the wake of [The Every Animal Project’s investigation](#), which exposed the supposed small-scale conservation research facility as a highly popular petting zoo that used tourist dollars to expand its octopus farming facility.

The facility closed permanently after the state did not renew its lease following pressure from animal advocates, [Compassion in World Farming USA](#) reported.

Location: It was located at the [Hawaii Ocean Science and Technology Park](#) at Keahole Point.

Controversy: The closure followed allegations of cruel and unsustainable practices, including keeping wild-caught, intelligent cephalopods in small tanks.

[Death, Fines, And Captive Animals: Is Sea Life Park Part ...](#)

[Honolulu Civil Beat](#)

<https://www.civilbeat.org › 2022/06 › death-fines-and-c...>

Jun 9, 2022 — Perhaps most troubling of all, figures suggest that the *animals* at *Sea Life Park* die at a higher rate than at a number of comparable facilities.

SEA LIFE PARK

[Protesters rally against Sea Life Park Hawaii](#)



[Hawaii News Now](#)

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com › story › protesters-ra...>

Jun 7, 2015 — WAIMANALO, OAHU (HawaiiNewsNow) - *Protesters take a stand against dolphin and whale captivity* at one of Hawaii's most popular attractions.



[Ocean activists hold protest outside Sea Life Park](#)



[YouTube · KHON2 News](#)

[350+ views · 11 years ago](#)



2:10

For many families, it was a day of fun with the sea animals. But for some, it was a day to raise to awareness.

Search instead for [waikiki aquairum animal advocates news](#)

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[Whale Captivity Inspires Water Park Protests](#)

[Courthouse News](#)

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[Maui Ocean Center touts marine conservation, but ...](#)

<https://mauiow.com › 2024/12/15 › maui-ocean-cente...>

Dec 15, 2024 — Nonprofit For the Fishes said it has found that the *Maui Ocean Center* has repeatedly violated its special permits over the years, ...

as Conservation

by ANDREW L. RHYNE, PH.D.

<https://reefbuilders.com/2026/03/13/market-manipulation-branded-as-conservation/>

Editorial on The Biota Group's Yellow Tang Comment and Position

There is a serious ethical problem when companies and investors try to use conservation policy to eliminate sustainable competitors and protect their own market position.

That is what makes The Biota Group's comment in the current push to ban Hawaii's aquarium fishery so troubling.

For years, activists have tried to paint the Hawaiian aquarium fishery as destructive, despite the fact that the West Hawaii fishery has long stood out as one of the best-studied and best-managed reef fisheries anywhere in the world, whether for food or aquarium use. In our 20+ years of published scientific work, and in the broader literature, the point has never been that every aquarium fishery is sustainable. The point is that these fisheries must be judged fishery by fishery, species by species, using data, management, and outcomes, not slogans. There are volumes of work that have described the Kona yellow tang fishery, prior to closures driven not by science but by activism, as a model of management under strong governmental capacity. In their efforts to reopen the fishery, the fishery plan has been further strengthened, with quotas, limited entry, and all the bells and whistles any fishery manager would like to have, all of which continue to improve the fishery.

What makes the current debate different is that some of the loudest direct support for a ban now comes from a company that commercially produces yellow tang. Their public

position is not surprising, and it is revealing. They do not rebut the scientific case for sustainability in any meaningful way. Instead, they argue that aquaculture exists, investors have spent money building it, and a ban on wild collection would strengthen their investment and confidence in that industry. That is not a conservation argument. It is a market argument, and it should not be treated as a conservation message.

Aquaculture has an important role to play in the aquarium trade. I have spent nearly 30 years working in aquaculture. My primary role is to develop aquaculture methods for aquarium fish. I support its development. I have written about its promise and also about its limitations. Often, investors are sold a bill of goods; hype and promises about how much money can be made in the aquaculture of aquarium fish. The problem is not aquaculture itself. The problem is when aquaculture is used as a moral shield for a political effort to eliminate a competing wild fishery that has been shown to operate under a serious management framework. Our published work has been explicit on this point. Captive propagation should not simply replace fisheries that provide sustainable value for existing communities and ecosystems, and neither wild capture nor captive breeding should be prioritized to the detriment of the other.

[See also Reefstock Denver Speakers Announced](#)

That matters because sustainability is not just about whether a fish can be bred in a tank. That does not make them sustainable. Sustainability is a broader relationship between society and the reef, one that sustains and improves the net benefit to the coral reef social-ecological system. That includes ecological outcomes, governance, accountability, and the livelihoods of the people who depend on these fisheries. It also means recognizing that when local fishers derive economic value from healthy reefs, they have a reason to protect those systems. In our work, we have warned that if aquarium fisheries are shuttered, communities do not stop using resources. They shift to other forms of use, potentially in less sustainable ways.

This is why investor-driven policy advocacy in this space deserves real scrutiny. When a company that sells cultured yellow tang supports shutting down the wild yellow tang fishery, the public is entitled to ask a basic question: who benefits? The answer is not hard to see in this case. Restrict supply from a competing source, and scarcity helps

support price. Biota and Oceanic Institute have benefited enormously from the closure of the West Hawaii aquarium fishery. Protect a market niche, and investors have a clearer story to tell about future profits. Dress that strategy up in the language of reef protection, and it becomes easier to market as virtue rather than self-interest.

That is the corrupting influence here. Not necessarily corruption in the criminal sense, but the corruption of conservation by financial incentive, and it is disingenuous. Moreover, I would argue it is unethical to ask lawmakers and the public to believe that destroying one group's livelihood is a moral necessity when the real effect is to improve the business environment for another group. It is unethical to present that as if it were a selfless act of reef stewardship. It is unethical to erase the fishers, families, and local knowledge embedded in a sustainable fishery simply because a better-capitalized sector would prefer less competition.

[See also UNS Introduces Hybrid Holding System](#)

I see this same pattern appear elsewhere in the aquarium trade. Domestic coral producers would benefit when sustainably managed coral exports from places like Indonesia face tighter restrictions, because reduced supply abroad can lift prices here in the US. Again, that does not mean every producer acts in bad faith. But you should be honest about the incentives. Too often, conservation measures are sold to the public as if they are automatic wins, when in reality they may do little for reefs while shifting market share toward firms already positioned to profit from scarcity. What The Biota Group has supported is not conservation. That is protectionism wrapped in environmental language.

A mature conservation ethic should be able to discern between a destructive fishery that needs to be stopped and a well-managed fishery that should be supported, improved, and held accountable. It should be able to distinguish between aquaculture as a complement to sustainable wild trade and aquaculture as a political tool used to displace it. It should be able to see that reef conservation and fisher livelihoods are not enemies when a fishery is genuinely well managed.

The future of the aquarium trade should not belong exclusively to investors, to slogans, nor to whichever sector can afford the best marketing campaign. It should belong to the systems that actually work: transparent management, data-driven oversight, accountable trade, and a willingness to support both sustainable fisheries and responsible aquaculture where each makes sense.

If we let investor priorities define conservation, we will not get better reef policy or products. We will get policy that rewards capital, punishes livelihoods, and calls that outcome ethics. That would be a mistake for Hawaii, and a mistake for the broader aquarium trade.

Andrew L. Rhyne, Ph.D.

Andrew Rhyne, Ph.D., has invested his career in understanding marine ornamental aquaria: the biology of aquarium fishes and invertebrates, as well as the industry driven by human fascination for these creatures. The trade in aquarium species can be considered data limited industry and the lack of available trade data hinders sustainability movements within the trade. Dr. Rhyne has worked to develop solutions to this data gap. Dr. Rhyne is advancing the field of marine ornamental aquaculture, developing methods for breeding and rearing popular species in aquaria. His body of work illuminates life histories, husbandry and larval rearing requirements of many wild ornamental fish and invertebrate larvae. Dr. Rhyne proactively teaches others the skills that he has developed to support the development of marine ornamental aquaculture, both to his students as an Associate Professor at Roger Williams University in Bristol, RI, and concurrently to public aquarium professional as a Research Scientist at the New England Aquarium in Boston, MA. Dr. Rhyne received his B.S. from the University of North Carolina Wilmington, and his M.S. and Ph.D. from the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, FL.

The Owners of Biota are from Europe and New Zealand, so overseas sources control our fisheries and export, and are the ones making all of Hawaii's ornamental trade money. Local divers and fishermen, and researchers, do not get paid much, and most of the basic aquaculture support for this comes from NOAA grants.

Currently, in Hawaii, marine fish aquaculture is not a proven scientific path for the aquarium fishery! The Aquarium fishery, through SAP permits, continues to support tropical ornamental aquaculture!

NOAA Funding: The [Oceanic Institute of Hawai'i Pacific University \(HPU\)](#) has received significant grants for restorative aquaculture and to address environmental challenges.

The [Oceanic Institute of Hawai'i Pacific University \(HPU\)](#) receives federal funding primarily from [NOAA \(National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration\)](#), [the U.S. Department of Commerce](#), 600,000 every two years, and the U.S. Department of Education.

Only with federal funding, which is very hard to get, can most aquaculture facilities survive!

ECOHARVEST invested millions and failed; they went down quickly despite their expertise and SAP permits, with support from local Aquarium Fishers. Permits and denials also played a part. Constant fresh broodstock is key to the success of tropical fish aquaculture.

When they were denied the SAP permit due to anti-aquarium-fishery propaganda, they went belly up.

From a fishery perspective, we are disheartened.

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Location: It was located at the [Hawaii Ocean Science and Technology Park](#) at Keahole Point.

Controversy: The closure followed allegations of cruel and unsustainable practices, including keeping wild-caught, intelligent cephalopods in small tanks.

[Death, Fines, And Captive Animals: Is Sea Life Park Part ...](#)



[Honolulu Civil Beat](https://www.civilbeat.org)

<https://www.civilbeat.org> › 2022/06 › [death-fines-and-c...](#)

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SEA LIFE PARK

[Protesters rally against Sea Life Park Hawaii](#)



[Hawaii News Now](https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com)

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com> › [story](#) › [protesters-ra...](#)

Jun 7, 2015 — WAIMANALO, OAHU (HawaiiNewsNow) - *Protestors take a stand against dolphin and whale captivity* at one of Hawaii's most popular attractions.



[Ocean activists hold protest outside Sea Life Park](#)



[YouTube · KHON2 News](#)

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2:10

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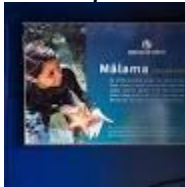
[Maui Ocean Center touts marine conservation, but ...](#)



[Maui Now](#)

<https://mauiow.com> › [2024/12/15](#) › [maui-ocean-cente...](#)

Dec 15, 2024 — Nonprofit For the Fishes said it has found that the *Maui Ocean Center* has repeatedly violated its special permits over the years, ...





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March 25, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

TESTIMONY ON HB 1572, HD2
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
3:00 PM

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, and Members of the Committees:

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 the intent of HB 1572, HD2.

Hawai'i's aquaculture sector is an important component of the State's agricultural economy and food system. Our favorable climate, geographic isolation, research capacity, and strong local demand for seafood position Hawai'i well to support a wide range of aquaculture activities, including innovative and restorative approaches that contribute to food production, environmental stewardship, and economic development.

We recognize the measure's intent to invest in infrastructure, workforce development, permit streamlining, pilot demonstration sites, and federal grant competitiveness. Reducing processing times and expanding shared infrastructure would benefit producers statewide and help strengthen Hawai'i's position in emerging blue economy sectors.

At the same time, Hawai'i's aquaculture industry includes a diverse mix of commercial operations, small-scale farms, research enterprises, and community-based systems. As this program is implemented, it will be important to ensure that support for restorative aquaculture complements, rather than displaces, other forms of commercial aquaculture that contribute to local food production, employment, exports, and economic stability.

A balanced approach that strengthens the entire aquaculture sector will help ensure long-term success and industry growth. HFB looks forward to continued collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and industry stakeholders as this measure moves forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



March, 2026

To: The Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment & Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

Subject: **HB1572**, Relating to Aquaculture Development

Aloha,

As amended, HB1572 HD2 establishes a four-year Restorative Aquaculture Development Program that advances Hawaii's goals in food security, environmental restoration and economic diversification. The amendments strengthened the bill by defining program goals, requiring a multi-sector advisory council and annual reporting to the Legislature. These additions provide transparency, accountability & measurable outcomes.

This bill helps to reduce Hawaii's heavy reliance on imported seafood by upscaling the local sector. Increases in local production keeps more food dollars circulating within Hawai'i, supports job creation, and strengthens food security during supply chain disruptions. Restorative aquaculture species such as seaweed and shellfish naturally improve water quality, enhance habitat, support native biodiversity, and contribute to carbon sequestration and shoreline protection. Residents and visitors alike depend on healthy nearshore reef ecosystems for their sustenance, livelihoods and authentic vacation experience. Investing in restoration today reduces future costs associated with environmental degradation and reef loss.

HB1572 HD2 positions Hawai'i to leverage state funding to access federal grants, streamline permitting processes, and grow a sustainable blue economy. With a four-year timeline, sunset provisions and annual reporting, this program is a time-bound and an accountable investment designed to generate measurable environmental and economic returns. This bill represents a practical and forward-thinking investment in Hawai'i's agricultural future, environmental health, and economic resilience. It reflects a systems-based approach that recognizes the deep connections between food production, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable economic growth.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to support and **pass HB1572 HD2**.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Mahalo,

Carlin McFadden & 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.

In 2026, 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.

HB-1572-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 5:02:38 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/25/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
scott folsom	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Please support Sustainable Aquarium Fisheries, Aquaculture Facilities, and the incredible, amazing science discovered from these activities!

Activists from snorkeling and tourism groups, who oppose Aquarium Fishing, also oppose ALL Public Aquariums and Aquaculture! Shut down for all aquariums is their unrelenting stance.

These same activists have attacked, successfully shut down, or affected operations of: Ecoharvest Kona, Kanaloa Octopus Farm, Maui Ocean Center, Sea Life Park, Petco Maui, Aquariums in Restaurants, and facilities both nationally and worldwide.

An unrelenting propaganda campaign by activists in the name of perverted ecology, lacking sound scientific support, has attacked Eco Harvest and the Special Activity Permit (SAP) Issuance, resulting in the loss of over a million dollars invested by Eco Harvest. With no new permit granted to collect healthy broodstock, the breeding facility failed!

A mature conservation ethic should be able to discern between a destructive fishery that needs to be stopped and a well-managed fishery that should be supported, improved, and held accountable. It should be able to distinguish between aquaculture as a complement to sustainable wild trade and aquaculture as a political tool used to displace it. It should be able to see that reef conservation and fisher livelihoods are not enemies when a fishery is genuinely well managed.

The future of the aquarium trade should not belong exclusively to investors, to slogans, nor to whichever sector can afford the best marketing campaign. It should belong to the systems that actually work: transparent management, data-driven oversight, accountable trade, and a willingness to support both sustainable fisheries and responsible aquaculture where each makes sense.

Thanks for your consideration.

HB-1572-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 10:36:27 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/25/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Comment

IRAN WAR IS COSTING TAXPAYERS 1BILLION \$ A DAY. ALTHOUGH THIS MEASURE IS LONG OVERDUE, LEGISLATURES MUST BE FISCAL RESPONSIBLE ON MEASURES SEEKING FUND.

1572 HB RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT.

HB-1572-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 4:52:03 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/25/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. Mahalo!