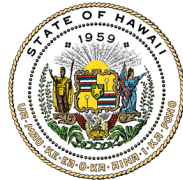


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



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

SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

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

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEM

Friday, January 30, 2026
9:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1603
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES**

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1603. This bill repeals the requirement for land covered by an agricultural park lease with a remaining term of 15 years or less to be located in a county having a population of less than 500,000 in order for the Department to extend the lease. The Department respectfully offers comments.

In the 2023 Session, the legislature passed House Bill 307, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 1, Conference Draft 1, which was signed into law as Act 213 on July 5, 2023. Act 213 allows the Department to extend agricultural park leases with remaining terms of fifteen years or less in any county with a population of 500,000 or less, provided the lease area is 25 acres or less. In effect, Act 213 authorizes lease extensions in all agricultural parks managed by the Department with the exception of those located on Oahu. House Bill 1603 appears to be intended to remove Act 213's restriction on the extension of Oahu agricultural park leases.

Existing agricultural park lessees generally advocate for the Department to be given broad authority to grant lease extensions. Such extensions allow them to make long-term plans for continued operations with new investments in their leasehold improvements and facilities. At the same time, persons on the Department's waitlist for agricultural lands would likely prefer that upon the expiration of existing lease terms, State lands be made available for lease to qualified farmers through a competitive process. The Department recognizes merit in both positions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



AHIKI ACRES

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems,

My name is Haley McKinnon, and I am writing on behalf of Ahiki Acres, LLC in strong support of House Bill 1603. This bill repeals the requirement that land covered by an agricultural park lease with a remaining term of fifteen years or less must be located in a county having a population of fewer than five hundred thousand in order for the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to extend the lease.

Ahiki Acres is a 6-acre diversified vegetable farm located in Waimānalo, Hawai'i. Since 2019, we have been providing fresh, high quality produce to the island of O'ahu. To meet growing community demand, in 2022 we acquired a 5.77-acre, 20-year agricultural lease from the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity. Neither my partner nor I come from an agricultural background beyond our training with GoFarm Hawai'i. Through education, mentorship, and years of hands-on work, we have built a viable farm business that currently generates approximately \$250,000 in annual revenue while contributing to local food security.

Despite this progress, securing and maintaining an agricultural lease has been an arduous and uncertain process. As a young farmer (29 years old), I am deeply concerned about the long-term future of our farm. We have already invested more than \$300,000 into our leased land, including essential infrastructure and significant soil rehabilitation. However, when our lease expires in November 2042, we currently have no option to extend it. The land would instead return to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and be put out to bid to the highest bidder, placing our farm's future at risk despite decades of stewardship and investment.

While Act 213, passed in 2023, created a pathway for agricultural park lease extensions, it excluded counties with populations over five hundred thousand, effectively disqualifying O'ahu. This exclusion disproportionately impacts farmers on the island who face higher land costs, greater development pressure, and limited access to agricultural land.

House Bill 1603 would correct this inequity. All we are asking for is fairness across counties and the opportunity to continue farming, investing in our land, and providing food for our community for generations to come.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Haley McKinnon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Haley Kaukea Eiko McKinnon
Co-Owner
Ahiki Acres, LLC



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Rep. Cory M. Chun, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

Friday, January 30, 2026 9:30 AM
Conference Room 325
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

RE: HB1603 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES

My name is Eric S. Tanouye and I am the President for the Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association. HFNA is a statewide umbrella organization with approximately 350 members. Our membership is made up with breeders, hybridizers, propagators, growers, shippers, wholesalers, retailers, educators, and the allied industry, which supports our efforts in agriculture.

The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) **SUPPORTS House Bill 1603** which repeals the requirement for land covered by an agricultural park lease with a remaining term of fifteen years or less to be located in a county having a population of less than five hundred thousand in order for the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

We want to see our growers and producers of our industry receive help and have future growers have the ability to enter the industry as a viable business option. We are currently experiencing an “aging farmer” problem and we need to plan to help new growers and farmers enter agriculture.

We are requesting an increase to the cap of 25 acres to up to 60 acres. We understand that there are leases that are larger than 25 acres and we feel if we want to really assist our farmers, ranchers, and nurserymen and women, increasing the limit up to 60 acres would include lots that may need lease extensions.

We ask that you support our industry and agriculture, so that we may continue to bring the beauty of Hawaii to others through flowers and ornamentals.



If you have any questions at this time, I would be happy to discuss them and can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 ext 2627, cell 960-1433 and email eric@greenpointnursery.com.

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,



Eric S. Tanouye
President

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

January 30, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 1606
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice-Chair Kusch, 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 strongly supports HB 1603, which addresses one of the most significant barriers to agricultural productivity on state lands: lease term uncertainty for farmers operating in agricultural parks.

Agricultural parks can and should support new and beginning farmers, but they must also support existing farmers with a proven track record of production. These farmers are currently producing Hawai'i's food, feed, fiber, fuel, and floriculture, and many have made substantial investments in their Ag Park operations. Farmers with short remaining lease terms may be discouraged from continued investment, restricted from accessing financing, and placed at risk of closure.

Lease certainty is essential for agricultural viability. Lenders routinely consider the remaining lease term when evaluating loan applications, and farmers with limited lease horizons are often unable to secure financing for their farm operations. By allowing lease extensions, HB 1603 encourages long-term planning, investment, and increased agricultural production on state lands.

While concerns are sometimes raised about waitlists for agricultural park leases, HFB believes the long-term solution is to increase the supply of agricultural park parcels rather than displacing productive, established farmers. Expanding agricultural park capacity by acquiring suitable private agricultural land and developing new or expanded parks, similar to the Kunia Agricultural Park, would create more opportunities for new and beginning farmers while preserving existing production. HB 1603 supports this balanced approach

by maintaining agricultural productivity today while allowing the State to pursue strategies that expand access to agricultural lands over time.

HFB also emphasizes that lease extensions under HB 1603 are discretionary, not automatic. The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity retains the authority to approve or deny extensions and to enforce lease terms to ensure bona fide agricultural use. This approach balances accountability with the need to support productive farming operations.

HFB respectfully suggests a modest amendment to expand eligibility from agricultural leases of twenty-five acres or less to thirty-five acres or less. Many family farming operations in Hawai'i operate within this range and face the same challenges related to financing, infrastructure investment, and long-term planning that this bill seeks to address. Expanding the acreage threshold would better reflect agricultural realities while remaining consistent with the bill's intent to support bona fide farmers.

HB 1603 represents a practical policy solution that encourages investment, protects existing agricultural production, and supports the State's goals of increasing local food production and strengthening food security. HFB respectfully urges your support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



PO Box 4, Kunia, Hawaii, 96759 || 808-622-9026 || www.agstewardshiphawaii.org

January 26, 2026

Aloha e Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch and Members of the Agriculture and Food Systems Committee,

Re: Testimony in Support of HB1603, Relating To Agricultural Park Leases

On behalf of Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i, we write in support of **HB1603**, which repeals the requirement for land covered by an agricultural park lease with a remaining term of fifteen years or less to be located in a county having a population of less than five hundred thousand in order for the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (HDAB) to extend the lease.

Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the viability and sustainability of Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers through technical assistance, resource coordination, business education, and policy support. In our day-to-day work with producers across the state and monthly working on access to agricultural land, **we hear a clear and urgent need for more and better access to affordable land, water and infrastructure for farming.**

Farmers often make significant investments in soil health, infrastructure, and community food systems, yet short-lease terms across the islands put farmers at risk of losing access to the land they've stewarded and discourage long-term investments. Additionally, few new agricultural leases are awarded each year and **most access HDAB ag park leases by purchasing a lease from an existing farmer.**

Farmers need more affordable access to agricultural land, water and infrastructure and consistency in public ag park lease terms. **This bill would bring consistency to ag park leases throughout the islands** and is a first step in broader efforts to update, streamline and improve affordable access to agricultural land, water and infrastructure.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Dr. Amanda Shaw, PhD, Statewide Food Systems Coordinator
Email: amanda@agstewardshiphawaii.org,
Tel: 808 429 5310

*Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i is a DBA of:
O'ahu Resource Conservation and Development Council, a 501c3 Nonprofit Corporation*

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Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems Committee,

The Hawai'i Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFU supports HB1603.**

This bill embraces a more inclusive approach to extending lease terms. This change would enable a wider range of farmers, irrespective of their county's population size, to plan and invest in their operations with greater confidence. The impact of this adjustment is profound, as it allows farm businesses to make long-term decisions, secure financing, and implement sustainable agricultural practices without the constant looming uncertainty of expiring leases.

By making lease extensions more accessible, farmers can readily undertake initiatives that enhance local food production and resilience in the face of global supply chain disruptions. With more predictable and extended lease terms, farmers are better equipped to implement innovative agriculture techniques and environmental stewardship practices, ultimately benefiting both the local economy and the environment.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



EAST OAHU COUNTY FARM BUREAU
910 CALIFORNIA AVE., WAHIAWA, HI 96786

January 29, 2026

LATE

Representative Cory M. Chun, Chair, and Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
State Capitol, 415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

The East O'ahu County Farm Bureau, which represents approximately 420 farmers and supporters of agriculture from Waimanalo to Kahuku, **strongly supports HB 1603**, "Relating to Agricultural Park Leases," which would allow O'ahu farmers to extend agricultural park leases with a remaining term of 15 years or less.

O'ahu has many small to medium-sized farms, including ones in State agricultural parks. To remain productive, especially in this time of technological change, farms need frequent investment in infrastructure and equipment. If farmers aren't sure that their farms will continue, they will be discouraged from making the necessary long-term investments. We therefore urge your Committee to pass HB 1603. We further suggest that the 25-acre limit be increased to 35 acres so that more medium-scale farmers can access the bill's benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter of great importance to Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frederick M. Mencher".

Frederick M. Mencher
for Grant Hamachi, President
East O'ahu County Farm Bureau

HB-1603

Submitted on: 1/29/2026 8:37:35 AM

Testimony for AGR on 1/30/2026 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Megan Blazak | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Support

HB-1603

Submitted on: 1/29/2026 9:13:33 AM

Testimony for AGR on 1/30/2026 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Nicole Galase | Hawaii Cattlemen's Council | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council supports this measure to keep agricultural production on these lands.

LATE

HB 1603 – Ag Park Lease Extension

Position: Support

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Alex Tranovich, and I am a coffee farmer from Upcountry Maui. I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB 1603.

Lease certainty is critical for farmers operating on state agricultural lands. When leases are close to expiration, it becomes difficult to invest in infrastructure, plant long-term crops, or access financing. Extending leases earlier gives farmers the confidence to plan, invest, and increase agricultural production.

HB 1603 supports both existing farmers who are actively producing and the State's broader goals of increasing local food production and food security. Maintaining productive farms while the State works to expand agricultural park capacity is a balanced and practical approach.

I also support a modest amendment to expand eligibility from 25 acres or less to 35 acres or less, which better reflects the size of many viable family farming operations that face the same lease uncertainty challenges.

Please support HB 1603.

Mahalo for your time and representation,

Alex Tranovich

HB 1603 – Ag Park Lease Extension

LATE

Position: Strongly Support

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Laurie Ho, and I am an agricultural supporter from Kauai community. I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB 1603.

Lease extensions are certainly critical for farmers and ranchers operating on state agricultural lands. When leases are close to expiration, it becomes difficult to invest in infrastructure, plant long-term crops, or access financing. Extending leases earlier gives farmers the confidence to plan, invest, and increase agricultural production.

HB 1603 supports both existing farmers who are actively producing and the State's broader goals of increasing local food production and food security and food resilience. Maintaining productive farms while the State works to expand agricultural park capacity is a balanced and practical approach.

I also support a modest amendment to expand eligibility from 25 acres or less to 35 acres or less, which better reflects the size of many viable family farms that face the same lease uncertainty challenges.

I ask you to please support HB 1603.

Mahalo for allowing me to submit written testimony,

/s/ Laurie Ho,
volunteer President
Kauai Farm Bureau
c/o admin@kauaicountyfarmbureau.org
PO Box 3895, Lihue HI 96766

LATE

HB-1603

Submitted on: 1/29/2026 8:16:16 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/30/2026 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Janel Yamamoto | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Agriculture and Food Systems Committee,

My name is Janel Yamamoto, and I serve as Co-Director of GoFarm Hawai‘i, a statewide farmer training and agribusiness support program that works with producers across the state.

Through my work, I see firsthand how access to land, water, and basic infrastructure continues to be one of the biggest barriers to long-term success. Many farmers make significant investments in soil health, equipment, and on-farm infrastructure over many years. When lease terms are short or inconsistent, those investments become risky and uncertain.

Agricultural park leases are an important pathway to affordable farmland in Hawai‘i. However, when lease extensions are limited by county population thresholds, farmers in higher-population counties face unnecessary instability compared to farmers elsewhere in the state.

HB1603 would help create greater consistency and fairness across agricultural park leases statewide. By allowing lease extensions regardless of county population, this bill gives farmers the predictability they need to plan ahead, invest responsibly, and continue contributing to Hawai‘i’s local food system.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Janel Yamamoto

Personal Testimony