



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Friday, January 30, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience
and
Vassilis Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1605 – RELATING TO HUMAN AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1605. This measure provides the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) with resources for the development of its Human and Community Resilience Institute (HCRI).

Food security and healthy diets are essential for positive youth development, thriving families, and resilient communities. Helping local families become food and nutritionally secure is one of CTAHR's core missions, but the end of the SNAP Ed program by the federal government has led to the loss of 13 food educators at the college. The loss of these trusted community partners will accelerate the already urgent need that more than 30% of Hawai'i households are food insecure.

The proposed new HCRI will be community-based and data-driven uniting our centers and programs with a shared purpose: to increase children's food and nutritional security, increase positive youth development and health outcomes, increase family well-being, foster food and farming entrepreneurship, develop new graduate degrees, and increase community resilience.

HCRI will partner with community organizations and government agencies and leverage the network of CTAHR's Centers for Applied Research and Extension Services (CARES) statewide to build sustainable solutions to food and nutritional insecurity challenges in Hawai'i. The appropriation in HB1605 will support statewide community assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



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: HB1605 RELATING TO HUMAN AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

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 1605** which Appropriates funds to the University of Hawaii at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience for the development of its human and community resilience institute.

The University of Hawaii at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience has been a valuable partner to HFNA and our industry for many years. They have supported our industry in critical times helping to develop pest and disease management and control tools. They have helped with a breeding program that has allowed our floriculture industry to compete on a global level. Finally, the education and support of CTAHR extension agents are a valuable resource to our growers and producers.

This investment into CTAHR is also an investment into agriculture, our community and to Hawai'i.

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 1605
RELATING TO HUMAN AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

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 supports HB 1605, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) for the development of its Human and Community Resilience Institute.

HFB has a long history of working closely with CTAHR on research, extension, and youth development efforts that directly support Hawai'i's farmers, ranchers, and agricultural communities. Programs such as 4-H youth development, nutrition education, and community-based extension play an important role in building a future agricultural workforce, strengthening demand for local agricultural products, and improving community understanding of agriculture.

HB 1605 seeks to consolidate and strengthen existing CTAHR programs under a coordinated, data-driven framework. HFB understands that recent federal funding changes have reduced CTAHR's capacity in food and nutrition education, and this measure provides an opportunity to stabilize and better align programs that support families, youth, and agricultural communities across the State.

From an agricultural perspective, efforts that improve food and nutrition education, support youth engagement through 4-H, and provide better data and evaluation can complement broader goals to strengthen Hawai'i's food system and agricultural economy. HFB appreciates that this measure focuses on coordination, education, and capacity-building rather than regulation or mandates for farmers and ranchers.

HFB recognizes CTAHR as a critical partner in Hawai'i's agricultural ecosystem and supports HB 1605 as an investment in education, extension, and community-based programs that ultimately benefit agriculture statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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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 HB1605.**

HB1605 recognizes the pressing need to fortify Hawaii's resilience against the escalating challenges posed by climate change, economic fluctuations, and social dynamics. The proposed investment in the University of Hawaii at Manoa's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience represents a foundational enhancement of our community's adaptive capacities. By channeling resources into the development of a dedicated institute, HB1605 ensures a concentrated effort toward research and education aimed at fostering robust human and community resilience across our islands.

For Hawaii's farmers, the impacts of climate change are not merely theoretical; they constitute daily challenges that require immediate and innovative responses. By focusing on resilience, HB1605 promises to empower local farmers with the knowledge and tools necessary to adapt to environmental changes, thereby safeguarding Hawaii's agricultural heritage and food security. The integration of advanced research and community outreach can foster more resilient agricultural systems that are better equipped to withstand environmental stressors and contribute to a healthier ecosystem.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



HAWAII

FOOD
POLICY

Honolulu, HI 96813
food@purplemaia.org

LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

LATE

January 29, 2026

To: Chair Cory Chun, Vice Chair Matthias Kusch, and the members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Subject: **HB1605**, Relating to Human and Community Resilience

Aloha,

I am writing in **support** of **HB1605**, which appropriates funds to the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) for the development of its Human and Community Resilience Institute.

Resilience is defined as the ability to withstand and adapt in the face of challenges. As exhibited during the pandemic and recent cuts to food assistance programs, any disruptions to our food system can easily devastate local families and communities. 1-in-3 households experience food insecurity, meaning that they do not have access to enough food to ensure a healthy, active lifestyle¹. In addition, a lack of adequate access to nutritious food and unhealthy eating habits are leading causes of diet-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, kidney and heart disease, and cancer². In order to foster family and community resilience, we need more community food system leaders, which begins with education and outreach.

I urge this committee to pass HB1605, which will support the education of our future community food system leaders by encouraging healthy eating habits and reconnecting them to their food system.

Mahalo,
Sydney Haas & 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.

¹[The State of Food Insecurity in Hawai'i \(2024-2025\)](#)

²[Hawai'i Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan 2030](#)



January 28, 2026

**Testimony in Support of HB 1605
Relating to Human and Community Resilience
Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems**

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

I submit this testimony in **strong support of HB 1605**. I offer this testimony as a community advocate and early childhood food systems consultant working alongside child care providers, farmers, food hubs, and community organizations to strengthen access to nutritious, locally sourced food for Hawai‘i’s keiki and families.

This bill is urgently needed. Early childhood education (ECE) programs serve meals during the most critical period of child development, yet they operate within a siloed system with limited coordination, technical assistance, or statewide goals to support local food procurement. Unlike the K–12 system, ECE programs lack a clear statewide strategy to connect agriculture, nutrition education, and early learning.

These challenges have been compounded by the cuts and dismantling of SNAP-Ed and other nutrition education and local food purchasing funding, which have significantly reduced community-based capacity to support providers and families. As a result, ECE programs are being asked to do more with fewer resources at a time when food insecurity remains high and demand for support continues to grow.

HB 1605 responds directly to this gap by investing in the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience and establishing a Human and Community Resilience Institute to better coordinate agriculture, nutrition, youth development, and community resilience efforts. The bill builds on strong existing UH programs while providing the staffing, coordination, and evaluation capacity needed to meet community needs.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of HB 1605.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,

Jordan Smith

Jordan Smith
Principal Consultant
Jordan Smith Consulting

Where strategy takes root

January 28, 2026
Personal Testimony Provided by Barbara DeBaryshe
In Support of HB 1605
Relating to Human and Community Resilience

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

I am writing to express my **strong support** for HB 1605. Urge you to vote in favor of HB 1605 for the following reasons:

- Hawai'i's families and communities are blessed with many strengths that stem from our aloha spirit, intergenerational ties, pride of place, and multicultural heritage. At the same time, our families and communities are stressed by a housing crisis, spiraling cost of living, food insecurity, and the potential for political and social conflict at the national level. For example:
 - 45% of households are ALICE households earning less than the basic survival budget (United for ALICE, 2025).
 - 32% of households experience food insecurity (over 40% in Maui and Hawai'i Counties) resulting in hunger, anxiety, and preventable health problems (Hawaii Food Bank, 2024-2025).
 - 34% of high school students report depression and 26% have had suicidal thoughts (Hawai'i Health Matters, 2023).
 - Child care is a frequent to daily source of worry for 57% of families with young keiki (C & C of Honolulu Early Childhood Family Survey, 2025).
- Recent and pending changes in federal policies and funding threaten the social safety net and will only make the current situation worse.
- The College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience is uniquely suited to address these community needs. The programs that will form the new Human and Community Resilience Institute (EFNEP, CHL, 4-H, Center on the Family) have expertise and long histories of collaborating with state agencies and community organizations. They work hand-in-hand with stakeholders to conduct needs assessments and design and deliver innovative research-based programs that enhance family and community resilience and well-being.
- Funding will offset the loss of 13 SNAP educator positions and increase CTAHR's capacity to serve the community and respond to emerging needs. The new institute will focus on food and nutritional security, positive family and youth development, and the collection of timely data to drive policy and track progress.

This institute embodies what is best about the Land Grant University system. It will be good for UH and good for the state. Please vote to pass bill 1605.

In the interest of full disclosure, note that I have been a University of Hawai'i faculty member for over 30 years. Although this experience informs my perspective on the bill, I submit this testimony as a private individual and concerned citizen.

HB-1605

Submitted on: 1/29/2026 8:40:18 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-1605

Submitted on: 1/29/2026 9:27:11 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Yuan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I strongly support HB 1605 and respectfully urge your favorable vote.

Families and communities face growing challenges in meeting basic needs such as food, housing, and healthcare, while recent and pending federal funding changes threaten to weaken the social safety net.

The proposed Human and Community Resilience Institute within the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience will help offset the loss of SNAP educators and expand coordinated, research-based efforts to support food and nutrition security, youth and family development, and data-driven policymaking. This new institute will integrate existing expertise and resources within the College to ensure excellence and long-term stability in protecting essential services and strengthening community resilience.

In full disclosure, I have been a University of Hawaii faculty member for 20 years, but submit this testimony as a concerned citizen.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,
Sarah Yuan

HB 1605 – Human and Community Resilience Institute (CTAHR)

Position: Support

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

My name is Alex Tranovich. I am a coffee farmer from Upcountry Maui and I am submitting testimony in support of HB 1605.

HB 1605 supports the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) by strengthening coordination of existing programs that support agriculture, youth development, and community education.

CTAHR plays a vital role in Hawai'i's agricultural ecosystem through research, extension, and programs such as 4-H that help develop the next generation of agricultural leaders.

Efforts that improve food and nutrition education, youth engagement, and data coordination also help strengthen demand for local agricultural products.

HB 1605 focuses on education, coordination, and capacity-building, not regulation of farmers. Supporting CTAHR is an investment in agriculture and our communities.

Please support HB 1605.

Mahalo,

Alex Tranovich

LATE

HB-1605

Submitted on: 1/29/2026 2:42:57 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randy Cabral	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support