

ThriveHI

111 Hekili Street
Kailua, HI 96734



To be presented to the Committee on
Committee on Economic Development and Technology
Friday, January 30, 2026

Regarding HB 1613:
"Relating to the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation"

Testimony in Support

Date: January 27, 2026

From: Zack Hernandez
Executive Director, ThriveHI
Email: zack@thrivehi.org

To: Chair Rep. Greggor Ilagan,
Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Hussey,
and Members of the Committee,

Aloha,

My name is Zack Hernandez, and I am the Executive Director of ThriveHI. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1613.

ThriveHI supports HB 1613, which appropriates funds for the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) to establish one permanent 1.0 FTE Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist position and one permanent 1.0 FTE Marketing and Branding Specialist position. The bill requests a total of \$200,000 for FY 2026 to 2027.

ThriveHI is a nonprofit focused on growing Hawai'i's startup and tech economy. We convene the community through events and create higher paying jobs and remote careers for Hawaii's tech ecosystem. We share ecosystem updates through a regular newsletter. We publish and gather research and resources. We also partner with other organizations to expand statewide impact. Our work is aligned with creating higher quality jobs for local residents and strengthening economic resilience.

HB 1613 is a practical capacity investment. It helps HTDC execute its mandate to support startups, enable commercialization, coordinate statewide innovation, and promote Hawai'i as a place to build and scale technology companies. These are core ingredients for economic diversification, stronger local career pathways, and improved resilience across the islands.

The Marketing and Branding Specialist position matters in particular. Many programs and facilities already exist. The gap is often awareness, clarity, and consistent outreach. A dedicated role can improve how founders, students, employers, investors, and partners discover and access HTDC resources. It can help ensure neighbor island participation through consistent communications and relationship building. It also strengthens Hawai'i's external story, which supports talent attraction and investment attraction.

The Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist position is also timely. Advanced manufacturing supports higher wage technical roles and more local supply chain capability. Cybersecurity capacity supports businesses, critical infrastructure, and a safer digital economy. Together, these roles help Hawai'i compete for projects, partners, and talent that increasingly expect strong security and modern production capability.

This bill supports outcomes that matter statewide. More local jobs with growth potential. A more diversified economy. Stronger resilience to shocks. Better retention of local talent. More attraction of outside investment that complements local priorities.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee on Economic Development and Technology to pass HB 1613.

Mahalo,

Zachary Hernandez

Zack Hernandez
Executive Director
ThriveHI

Statement of
Gabriel Hanohano
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions

before the
House Committee on Economic Development and Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 and Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1613
RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Technology.

Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions strongly SUPPORTS HB 1613, which appropriates funds to establish Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist and Marketing and Branding Specialist positions within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation. These roles are essential to strengthening Hawai'i's technology ecosystem and advancing the State's position as a leader in innovation across the blue economy, advanced manufacturing, and secure digital infrastructure.

Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions is a Hawai'i based drone technology and remote sensing company focused on infrastructure, environmental monitoring, and coastal systems. Our work increasingly depends on advanced manufacturing supply chains, secure software systems, and trusted data workflows. As drone platforms, sensors, and autonomous systems grow more sophisticated, the ability to integrate advanced manufacturing practices and maintain strong cybersecurity standards is no longer optional. It is foundational to operating responsibly, competitively, and in compliance with both commercial and government requirements.

The addition of an Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist within HTDC would directly benefit companies like ours by providing technical guidance, coordination, and strategic support at the State level. Many Hawai'i based technology firms operate at the intersection of hardware, software, and data. Access to expertise that helps local companies adopt modern manufacturing techniques, strengthen cyber resilience, and navigate federal and defense related compliance requirements will reduce barriers to growth and help retain high value work within the islands.

Equally important, the creation of a Marketing and Branding Specialist position recognizes that innovation alone is not enough. Hawai'i based technology companies must also be able

to clearly communicate their capabilities, differentiate themselves in national and global markets, and attract partners, customers, and investment. Coordinated branding and market positioning support through HTDC can amplify the visibility of Hawai'i's innovation ecosystem as a whole, benefiting individual companies while reinforcing the State's reputation as a serious technology center.

From an economic standpoint, these roles support the development of a resilient and diversified economy. Our company employs a small but highly skilled local workforce across engineering, flight operations, data processing, and STEM education support. Our long term strategy emphasizes intellectual property development, secure system design, and platform integration rather than off island manufacturing or outsourcing. HB 1613 strengthens the institutional capacity needed to help Hawai'i based companies scale in this direction while maintaining security, quality, and competitiveness.

In summary, HB 1613 makes a targeted and strategic investment in the human infrastructure required to support advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, and effective market engagement. Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions supports this bill as a practical step toward enabling local technology companies to grow responsibly, protect critical systems, and compete successfully in high value global markets.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



January 27, 2026

House Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Rep Ilagan, Chair
Rep Hussey, Vice Chair

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 1613 Relating to HTDC

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Garrett W. Marrero, and I live in Kihei, Hawai'i. I am the CEO and Founder of Maui Brewing Co., operating locations in Lahaina, Kaanapali, and Kihei on Maui, and Waikiki and Kailua on Oahu. We distribute our beverages across Hawai'i, 26 states, and 2 countries. Since our founding in 2005, we have grown from 26 team members to over 400 statewide.

We strongly support HB 1613, which provides funding for HTDC to add an Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist, along with a Marketing and Branding Specialist. These positions are important if Hawai'i is serious about growing its role as a technology and innovation leader in the Pacific—especially in areas like the blue economy, advanced manufacturing, and cybersecurity.

Adding an Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist makes a lot of sense and fits squarely within HTDC's mission to grow our economy through technology. Manufacturing in Hawai'i is growing, but it still makes up only about 2.3% of our state GDP, compared to roughly 11% nationally. That gap represents real opportunity. With the right expertise in place, HTDC can better help local companies modernize operations, adopt Industry 4.0 technologies, strengthen supply chains, and protect themselves from cyber threats—which are only getting more costly and more common. In fact, cybercrime alone cost U.S. businesses over \$6.9 billion in 2021.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of HB1613. It's a practical step that will aid in diversifying our economy and boost manufacturing.

Mahalo for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Garrett W. Marrero
CEO/Founder

Handcrafted Ales & Lagers Brewed with Aloha
605 Lipoa Parkway, Kihei, HI 96753
808.213.3002



Written Statement of
Trung Lam, Executive Director

before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 am
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1613
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee.

HTDC strongly supports HB1613, which appropriates funds for the establishment of Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist and Marketing and Branding Specialist positions within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation. As Hawaii seeks to diversify its economy and strengthen its position as a leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, these investments are both timely and essential.

Advanced manufacturing is a cornerstone of modern economic development, with global data indicating that every dollar spent in manufacturing generates \$1.40 in additional economic activity. Hawaii's manufacturing sector, while growing, currently represents just 2% of the state's GDP, compared to the national average of 11%. By establishing a dedicated Advanced Manufacturing Specialist, HTDC will be better equipped to support local companies in adopting cutting-edge technologies, expanding their operations, and creating high-skilled jobs. This is particularly critical for sectors aligned with Hawaii's strengths, including ocean technology, renewable energy, and aerospace.

The addition of a Marketing and Branding Specialist is equally important. Hawaii's technology sector has made significant progress, yet many local innovations remain under-recognized nationally and globally. Enhanced marketing and branding will help attract investment, foster partnerships, and position Hawaii as a leader in emerging fields such as the blue economy, artificial intelligence, and renewable energy. This aligns directly with HTDC's mission to develop the Space and Ocean sectors and to promote technology-driven economic growth.

In summary, HB1613 is a strategic investment in Hawaii's future. By supporting advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, and targeted marketing, the bill will accelerate economic diversification, create high-value jobs, and enhance the state's competitiveness in the global innovation economy. HTDC urges the Legislature to pass HB1613 and continue its commitment to technology-based economic development.



Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation

521 Ala Moana Blvd, Ste 255
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

808-539-3806
www.htdc.org

Sincerely,

Trung Lam

Executive Director & CEO

Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation





Blue Startups

55 Merchant Street, Suite 1700
Honolulu, HI 96813

To be presented to the Committee on
Economic Development and Technology
Friday, January 30, 2026 at 10:00 am

Regarding HB 1613:
“Relating to the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation”

Testimony in Support

Date: January 28, 2026

From: David Holt
Program Director, Blue Startups
david@bluestartups.com

To: Chair Rep. Greggor Ilagan,
Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Hussey,
and Members of the Committee,

Aloha,

My name is David Holt, and I am the Program Director at Blue Startups. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB 1613.

Blue Startups was founded to help diversify Hawai‘i’s economy by building a stronger technology sector and creating high quality local jobs. For the last 12 years, we’ve supported entrepreneurs with mentorship, business expertise, product validation, investor introductions, and seed funding.

Our work depends on a connected statewide innovation ecosystem. That ecosystem improves when HTDC has the capacity to consistently deliver programs and communicate opportunities.

HB 1613 appropriates funds for HTDC to establish one permanent 1.0 FTE Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist position and one permanent 1.0 FTE Marketing and Branding Specialist position, for a total request of \$200,000 for FY 2026 to 2027.

Why this bill matters?

This is a targeted, cost effective capacity investment. It helps HTDC execute its statutory mandate to grow the technology industry, support startups, encourage commercialization, coordinate statewide innovation, and promote Hawai'i for tech based economic activity.

Marketing and Branding drives participation and investments in Hawai'i



A dedicated marketing and branding specialist is the front door for Hawai'i's innovation economy. Clear outreach increases awareness and adoption of programs, facilities, and events that already exist. It helps founders and employers find resources faster. It helps investors, partners, and talent understand how to engage. It also supports consistent statewide participation across all islands, not just O'ahu.

For an accelerator like Blue Startups, stronger statewide marketing means more founders from every county learn about support earlier. It means more local companies connect to mentors, pilots, and commercialization pathways. It means more outside capital and strategic partners see credible deal flow and infrastructure in Hawai'i.

Advanced manufacturing capacity supports local production, prototyping, and supply chain resilience. It also creates skilled, higher wage career pathways. Cybersecurity capacity protects companies, critical infrastructure, and public private innovation activity. Together, these capabilities help Hawai'i attract and retain high value employers and protect the growth we are trying to build.

Hawai'i Outcomes

HB 1613 supports outcomes that matter statewide. It strengthens job creation and career pathways. It accelerates diversification beyond a single dominant industry. It supports resilience through local capability and cybersecurity readiness. It improves attraction of talent, customers, partners, and investment. It increases statewide access to HTDC resources.

Conclusion

HB 1613 strengthens Hawai'i's innovation economy by ensuring HTDC can deliver specialized support and clearly communicate opportunities to the people and companies who need them.

We respectfully urge the Committee on Economic Development and Technology to pass HB 1613 and advance it with a recommendation of support.

Mahalo,

David Holt
Program Director
Blue Startups





Aidgentic LLC
1270 Avenue of the Americas, FL 7 1095
New York, NY 10020, United States

Phone: 808 222 0977
Email: hello@aidgentic.com
aidgentic.com

Statement of
Coltrane Kubo
COO
Aidgentic LLC
before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference
In consideration of
HB 1613
RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

Aidgentic LLC **SUPPORTS** HB 1613, which appropriates funds to establish Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist and Marketing and Branding Specialist positions within HTDC. These roles are critical to advancing Hawaii's position as a technology innovation leader in the Pacific, particularly in the blue economy, advanced manufacturing, and cybersecurity sectors.

The addition of an Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist aligns directly with HTDC's mission to foster economic growth through technology. Hawaii's manufacturing sector, while growing, remains underrepresented compared to national averages, accounting for just 2.3% of state GDP versus the U.S. average of 11%. By investing in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity expertise, HTDC can better support local companies in adopting Industry 4.0 technologies, improving supply chain resilience, and mitigating the increasing threat of cyberattacks—a threat that cost U.S. businesses over \$6.9 billion in 2021 alone, according to the FBI.

Aidgentic is a AI-focused automation agency that helps small and midsize businesses adopt practical AI, cybersecurity aware automation, and modern digital infrastructure without large teams or costly system overhauls. Our work spans marketing automation, data systems, internal tooling, and AI assisted workflows that improve efficiency, resilience, and security for companies across sectors including professional services, education, and real estate.

As cybersecurity risks grow alongside increased automation and AI adoption, having dedicated specialists within HTDC would help ensure that local businesses scale responsibly, protect sensitive data, and remain competitive with mainland counterparts.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

HB-1613

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 3:12:45 PM

Testimony for ECD on 1/30/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anthony John Escasa	Pacific Impact Zone	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF HB1613
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of HB1613, which appropriates funds for the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to establish an Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist position and a Marketing and Branding Specialist position.

HB1613 directly advances the Legislature's stated intent to strengthen Hawai'i's technology and innovation ecosystem, particularly in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity, which are increasingly critical to economic resilience, supply chain security, and national competitiveness. As the bill correctly notes, the termination of federal Manufacturing Extension Partnership funding has left HTDC without sufficient internal capacity to continue statewide advanced manufacturing efforts at a time when demand from industry and direction from the Legislature are increasing.

From an execution standpoint, these positions are not abstract administrative additions. They are foundational roles needed to translate policy direction into on-the-ground outcomes. Advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity initiatives require dedicated technical leadership to coordinate ecosystems, support small and mid-sized manufacturers, assist with federal grant competitiveness, and align workforce development with real industry needs. Without this internal expertise, HTDC's ability to respond effectively to legislative priorities and industry demand is constrained.

The Marketing and Branding Specialist position strengthens HTDC's ability to communicate and scale its impact. Effective ecosystem development requires sustained outreach, clear messaging, and consistent engagement with industry, investors, and partners. Dedicated internal capacity in this area will help ensure that state-supported programs are visible, accessible, and fully utilized statewide.

I am currently working with HTDC in a public-private partnership capacity to support the establishment of a shared-use advanced manufacturing facility that would enable Hawai'i-based companies to design, test, and produce commercial-grade products without prohibitive capital

costs. Efforts like this depend heavily on strong internal HTDC capacity in advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity readiness, ecosystem coordination, and external engagement. HB1613 directly enables that capacity.

In summary, HB1613 is a targeted, pragmatic investment in the people and infrastructure required to carry out the Legislature's stated goals. It strengthens HTDC's ability to support manufacturers, startups, and defense-adjacent industries, while positioning Hawai'i to compete more effectively in high-growth, high-wage sectors.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1613.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Testimony to the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology (ECD)

**Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair**

**Friday, January 30, 2026, at 10:00AM
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference**

RE: HB1613 Relating to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation

Aloha e Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 1613 (HB1613), appropriates funds for the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to establish Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist and Marketing and Branding Specialist positions. As a State that hosts all six branches of military and received \$10.2 billion in defense spending (2023), these positions will be crucial in stimulating the innovation that galvanizes national security.

HB 1613 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Military and Defense. Innovation is of particular importance to this pillar, as our 2030 Blueprint finds that Department of Defense allocations toward Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) have doubled between 2016 and 2023. As cybersecurity and emerging technology fields increasingly rely on advanced capabilities such as artificial intelligence, preparing a skilled, local workforce is essential to support efficiency, cost savings, and mission readiness while reducing risk to human life. Similarly, additive and other technology-based manufacturing capabilities can significantly hasten repair timelines, lower sustainment costs, and improve operational resilience. The investment in innovation represented by HB 1613 will allow HTDC to expand its capacity to support cybersecurity and advanced manufacturing industry development, capture trends in institutional spending, and strengthen Hawaii's technology ecosystem through sustained marketing, outreach, and promotion.

The provision of permanent funding for manufacturing and cybersecurity capacity at HTDC is vital towards the development of these respective economies. With the cybersecurity job market in Honolulu projected to increase by 32% between 2022 and 2032, this investment will benefit the State by decreasing our import reliance, creating jobs in State-identified priority industries, and stimulating innovation for technologies that bolster national security. The inclusion of marketing and branding capacity is also of prime importance, contributing towards robust, cohesive, and engaging messaging around HTDC's full suite of services. This encourages further utilization of these services while publicizing HTDC's accomplishments and success stories, improving return on investment across organizational efforts.



Chamber *of* Commerce HAWAII



The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 1613. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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info@hawaiiifood.com

Executive Officers

Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp., *Chair*
Jayson Watts, Mahi Pono, *Vice Chair*
Jill Tamura, Tamura Super Market, *Secretary/Treas.*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *President and Executive Director*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, Odom, *Advisor*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Advisor*
Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Economic Development and Technology

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: January 30, 2026

TIME: 10am

RE: HB1613 Relating to Hawaii Technology Development Corporation

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure to strengthen Hawaii's technology and innovation ecosystem by appropriating funds to establish advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity specialist and marketing and branding specialist positions.

Many of our member businesses have successfully utilized HTDC programs to do things like increase manufacturing capacity, upgrade equipment, increase efficiency, and become technologically enabled.

Providing state funding for HTDC to continue this work will ensure that more Hawaii companies have the opportunity to utilize these programs to grow and thrive. Supporting the growth and advancement of these companies leads to a more diverse, more technologically agile, and stronger economy for us all. We urge the Committee to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Hawaii Tech Week

435 Puamamane Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96821

To be presented to the Committee on
Committee on Economic Development and Technology
Friday, January 30, 2026

Regarding HB 1613:
“Relating to the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation”

Testimony in Support

Date: January 29, 2026

From: Michael Bennett
Founder, Hawaii Tech Week
aloha@honolulutechweek.com

To: Chair Rep. Greggor Ilagan,
Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Hussey,
and Members of the Committee,

Aloha Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members,

My name is Michael Bennett, and I am the Founder of Hawai‘i Tech Week (HTW), formerly Honolulu Tech Week. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1613.

Hawai‘i Tech Week is an annual week of events where the local and global tech community connects to build relationships, level up, and create opportunity. Events are independently hosted by companies and leaders and include panels, mixers, product launches, workshops, and more. Our mission is to accelerate tech talent, capital, and adoption to elevate our people, grow Hawai‘i’s economy, and impact the world.

HB 1613 helps the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) by paying for two full-time staff jobs for the 2026–2027 budget year: especially to support marketing and branding.

HTW exists to be a platform that amplifies the ecosystem, while hosting a few anchor events during the week. We grow audience and media reach through the year, market the week and coordinate the calendar, and channel demand to the calendar and website to benefit event hosts and sponsors. That means we see the difference between “resources exist” and “people can actually find and use them.”



A dedicated marketing and branding specialist at HTDC is a high-leverage front door for Hawai'i's innovation economy. This role increases awareness and utilization of HTDC programs and facilities. It helps founders, students, employers, investors, and partners understand what exists and how to engage. It also supports statewide participation across all islands through consistent outreach. Externally, it helps Hawai'i tell a clear, credible story that attracts and retains talent and investment.

The advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity specialist strengthens the practical foundation for growth and resilience. Cybersecurity readiness is now required to protect operations, win customers, and scale. Advanced manufacturing capability supports prototyping, iteration, and local capacity. Together, these functions help create higher-quality jobs, strengthen startups and small businesses, and improve Hawai'i's economic resilience.

HTW OUTCOMES SHOW WHY ECOSYSTEM "CONNECTIVE TISSUE" MATTERS

When HTW wins, the ecosystem wins. Founded in 2024, HTW 2025 featured 60+ events across 25 venues and 3,000+ attendees, drawing from a network of 4,500+ people across Hawai'i and 50 cities globally, from San Francisco to Singapore. HTW fosters new relationships, hires, investments, partnerships, and showcases Hawai'i's growing role in the global tech economy.



Examples of outcomes that HTW has been a meeting point or catalyst for include:

- A Hawai'i startup launches and raises its first angel check
- Dozens of hires and internships across startups and industry
- Millions of dollars in venture and LP investments
- Hundreds of thousands in new revenue for Hawai'i's economy
- Kama'āina abroad plugging into the local ecosystem
- New mentors for Native Hawaiian STEM scholars
- A tech nonprofit recruits its founding Board of Directors
- Hundreds of thousands of positive impressions for Hawai'i tech



HB 1613 supports the same pathway at scale. It helps people discover programs, participate, and convert activity into outcomes.

HAWAI'I OUTCOMES THIS BILL ADVANCES

HB 1613 supports statewide outcomes that matter:

- Jobs: stronger pipelines into higher-wage roles and increased hiring through a healthier innovation ecosystem
- Diversification: greater tech adoption and commercialization across multiple industries
- Resilience: improved cybersecurity capacity and stronger local production and prototyping capability
- Talent and investment attraction: clearer messaging and easier engagement for external capital and returning talent
- Statewide impact: consistent outreach and participation across all islands



In conclusion, HB 1613 strengthens Hawai'i's innovation economy by ensuring HTDC has the specialized capacity to execute its mandate and connect more people to the resources already available. We respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB 1613 with a recommendation of support and advance it through the remaining referrals.

Mahalo,

Michael Bennett

Founder, Hawai'i Tech Week





Small Kine Farm

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smallkinefarm@gmail.com

www.smallkinefarm.com

Statement of
Fung Yang President Small Kine Farm
before the
ECD

Friday, January 30, 2026

10:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB1613
RELATING TO HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee.

Small Kine Farm **supports** HB1613 that appropriates monies to HTDC for positions in support of Advanced Manufacturing, Cybersecurity, and Marketing/Branding within HTDC.

HTDC core programs develop infrastructure, capital, and talent to facilitate the development of technology and manufacturing jobs in Hawai'i. Following their mission, HTDC programs aim to provide technical and financial support for innovative small businesses from the startup stage through growth and export.

My company is the only USDA Certified organic mushroom farm in the State. HTDC has helped us to start and stay competitive from the very beginning. I am hoping to see more small businesses who can benefit from their help with more staff and more funding. They are playing an important role in our economy. I am currently employing 5 full time and 1 part time workers at the farm. Last year revenue was \$350,000.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

HB-1613

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 11:17:28 PM

Testimony for ECD on 1/30/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicholas Ulm	Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Vice Chair,

My company, Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions, is a national leader in marine energy technology located here in Kaneohe. We produce a wave energy buoy called Halona, which produces power from ocean waves using principles similar to the Halona blowhole. It uses waves to compress air into a generator to produce power. It is a product of research from the University of Hawaii under Office of Naval Research funding. We produce these buoys to make power for the local maritime industry and for mariculture activities to help reduce the cost of food in our islands. This advances our state's energy and food independence goals. We are seeking to produce these buoys here locally using advanced manufacturing technologies and have been looking to HTDC for support in this process. We know there exists a vast resource of federal funding available to support Hawaii, with numerous equipment companies ready to supply the islands with the capabilities to manufacture locally. As a company, we have found that HTDC has needed more support in being able to coordinate, market, and go after these federal resources to support the companies already trying to do the work here locally. Our company is partnering with multiple other marine companies locally to create an advanced manufacturing center on Oahu to make Hawaii competitive in this. In our case, the technology being supported would source 100% of the materials locally from waste products to make electricity from sustainable and renewable resources to reduce the cost of local food production systems. In partnered cases, they would use similar locally sourced waste products for coastal protection, recreational ocean equipment production, and other marine energy systems. These companies can only do so much to highlight the state-wide activities to bring in larger federal opportunities. For this reason, HOPS supports this bill.

Gtscientific LLC, an advanced precision CNC machine shop located in Honolulu serving industries in defense, astronomy, marine, aerospace, semiconductors, consumer hardware, etc, since 2017.

Statement of
Grant Takara
Owner
Gtscientific LLC
before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026

10:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1613
RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

Gtscientific LLC strongly **SUPPORTS** HB 1613, which appropriates funds to establish Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist and Marketing and Branding Specialist positions within HTDC. These roles are critical to advancing Hawaii's position as a technology innovation leader in the Pacific, particularly in the blue economy, advanced manufacturing, and cybersecurity sectors.

The addition of an Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist aligns directly with HTDC's mission to foster economic growth through technology. Hawaii's manufacturing sector, while growing, remains underrepresented compared to national averages, accounting for just 2.3% of state GDP versus the U.S. average of 11%. By investing in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity expertise, HTDC can better support local companies in adopting Industry 4.0 technologies, improving supply chain resilience, and mitigating the increasing threat of cyberattacks—a threat that cost U.S. businesses over \$6.9 billion in 2021 alone, according to the FBI.

Advanced manufacturing in Hawaii is one of the most challenging industries and for many reasons ranging from the extreme low vacancy rates in industrial properties, high cost of basically everything, and barriers to getting material in and out of the state in a timely and competitive manner.

By establishing a marketing and branding specialist within HTDC local businesses can expect the assistance of a central and well connected individual who can connect the dots, businesses that can provide competitive goods and services to the right stakeholders. A lot of manufacturing money leaves the state and in some cases, particularly in the processing of aluminum goods, Gtscientific has been able to competitive bid and deliver on production jobs that otherwise would have left the state. This is only because we networked and connected with the right stakeholders who were also willing to have conversations about what we could be competitive on (not just price). By having a specialist that can connect with many different entities local businesses can expect to be able to obtain more information to find out what they can do to invest both time and resources in their operations to provide the maximum value to customers and thus retain and generate more economic activity within the state. Gtscientific does this on its own when they can but some larger entities such as bigger companies and government entities may be out of their reach and would benefit from such a specialist. 100% of our B2B work is on word of mouth.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



Blue Startups

55 Merchant Street, Suite 1700
Honolulu, HI 96813

To be presented to the Committee on
Economic Development and Technology
Friday, January 30, 2026 at 10:00 am

Regarding **HB1613**:
“Relating to the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation”

Testimony in Support

Date: January 28, 2026

From: Chenoa Farnsworth
Managing Director, Blue Startups
chenoa@bluestartups.com

To: Chair Rep. Greggor Ilagan,
Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Hussey,
and Members of the Committee,

Aloha,

My name is Chenoa Farnsworth, and I am the Managing Director at Blue Startups. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of HB 1613**.

Blue Startups was founded to help diversify Hawai‘i’s economy by building a stronger technology sector. For the last **12 years, we’ve supported entrepreneurs** with mentorship, business expertise, product validation, investor introductions, and seed funding.

Our work depends on a **connected statewide innovation ecosystem**. That ecosystem improves when HTDC has the capacity to deliver programs and communicate opportunities.

HB 1613 appropriates funds for HTDC to establish one **Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist** and one **Marketing and Branding Specialist**.

This is a targeted, cost effective capacity investment. It helps HTDC execute its statutory mandate to grow the technology industry, support startups, encourage commercialization, coordinate statewide innovation, and **promote Hawai‘i for tech based economic activity**.

Marketing and Branding drives participation and investment in Hawai'i.

A dedicated **Marketing and Branding Specialist** is the **front door for Hawai'i's innovation economy**. Clear outreach increases awareness and adoption of programs, facilities, and events that already exist. It helps founders and employers find resources faster. It helps investors, partners, and talent understand how to engage.

For an accelerator like Blue Startups, stronger statewide marketing means more startup founders. It means more local companies connect to mentors and investors. It means more outside capital and strategic partners see credible deal flow and infrastructure in Hawai'i.

HB 1613 strengthens Hawai'i's innovation economy by ensuring HTDC can deliver specialized support and clearly communicate opportunities to the people and companies who need them.

We respectfully urge the Committee on Economic Development and Technology to **pass HB 1613** and advance it with a **recommendation of support**.

Mahalo,

Chenoe Farnsworth
Managing Director
Blue Startups





Alexi Drouin

3113 Diamond Head Rd
Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

To be presented to the Committee on
Economic Development and Technology
Friday, January 30, 2026 at 10:00 am

Regarding HB1613:
"Relating to the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation"

Testimony in Support

Date: January 29, 2026

From: Alexi Drouin
Founder, Oihana.org
alexidrouin@gmail.com

To: Chair Rep. Greggor Ilagan,
Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Hussey,
and Members of the Committee,

Aloha Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members,

My name is Alexi Drouin, and I am the Founder of Oihana.org. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of HB 1613**.

I also support Hawai'i's innovation ecosystem through Program Operations at Blue Startups, as Assistant Director at Hawai'i Angels, as a Hawai'i Tech Week Ambassador, and as a ThriveHI and HTDC supporter. Wearing these hats gives me a clear, practical view of what the Hawai'i Tech Ecosystem needs most. The biggest gap is: **How do we tell Hawai'i's tech story?**

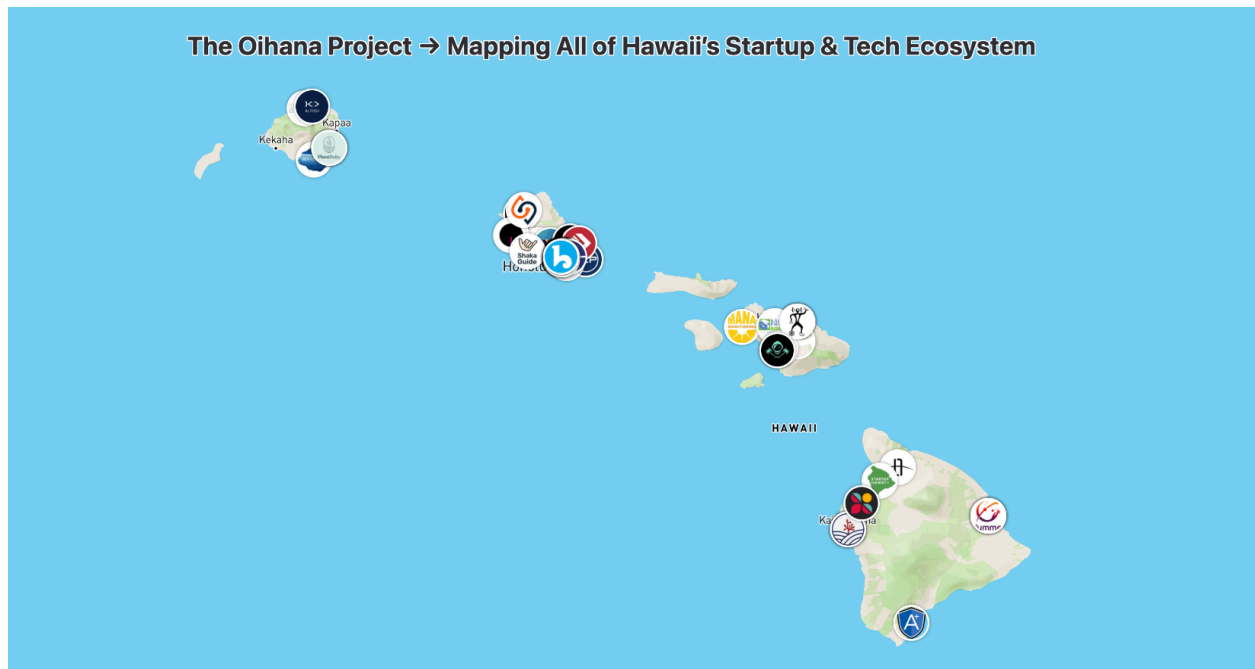
This question of "story" keeps coming up in every serious ecosystem conversation, including HTDC's Strategic Planning Workshop (Charting Hawaii's Tech Future).

This is not a hypothetical story. **Hawai'i's Tech Ecosystem** is already happening today. What we need now is a clearer vision, pathway, and platform for **sharing this story** to the world.

This is why I strongly support HB 1613 because it gives HTDC the capacity, by funding one permanent **Marketing and Branding** Specialist position, to do what the ecosystem needs most right now: marketing and branding our story of **"Built with Aloha!"** to the world.

Here is what being better able to tell our **story** unlocks across the **Hawai'i's Tech Ecosystem**:

- **Oihana.org**: Showcases and organizes Hawaii's tech ecosystem to the world.



- **Blue Startups**: Accelerate Hawai'i-based and female founders startups in Hawaii.



- **Hawai'i Angels:** Elevate startups and strengthen Hawai'i's funding capital pipeline.



- **Hawai'i Tech Week:** Amplify the heartbeat of Hawai'i tech scene: Our community.



- **ThriveHI:** Opens the door to tech with monthly meetups to welcome newcomers.



- **Purple Mai'a:** Elevate local founders through culturally grounded Hawaiian values.



Hawai'i does not need to become Silicon Valley. Hawai'i's Tech Ecosystem needs to amplify the marketing and branding that our companies are **Built in Hawai'i with Aloha**.

"Oihana" means "business" in Hawaiian. Our mission is simple: make Hawaii more attractive for business to the world. A dedicated HTDC marketing and branding specialist would help us on our mission to tell the world that Hawaii really means business.

You can see this in action when **Blue Startups** is accelerating companies, **Hawai'i Angels** showing up monthly to fund them, **Hawai'i Tech Week** convening the whole ecosystem, **ThriveHI** being the front door for newcomers, **Purple Mai'a** elevating culturally grounded founders, and **HTDC** charting the future of the statewide strategy.



Hawai'i already has a thriving tech community. The missing piece is a dedicated person whose job is to **organize, promote, and scale the story of what's already working**.

That's why HB 1613 and this **Marketing and Branding Position** matter. Turning scattered effort into a shared narrative, spotlight local wins, and make the pathway clear, from sparking curiosity to building community to growing companies. It also helps externally by **making Hawai'i visible**, credible, and easy to engage, so we can attract more talent, more capital, and bring our kama'āina home. **Telling our story** helps strengthen the entire Hawai'i tech ecosystem.

HB 1613 helps local founders, partners, and investors tell our story, with aloha, to the world so Hawai'i can become the **Startup Paradise** we've all been working to build together.

Thank you for your consideration, and I respectfully request your support in passing HB 1613.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alexi Drouin".

Alexi Drouin

Founder, Oihana.org

Program Operations, Blue Startups

Assistant Director, Hawaii Angels

Ambassador, Hawaii Tech Week

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL NO 1613 RELATING TO
THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Position: **Support**

To Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair; Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair; and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology

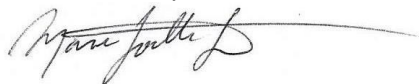
Please accept this testimony in **strong support** of this bill, to appropriate funds to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) to establish and fill specialist positions that would help support advanced manufacturing initiatives for the state the Hawai'i.

Simonpietri Enterprises LLC (SEL) is an O'ahu-based small business developing innovative ways to recycle waste generated in Hawai'i into renewable natural gas, green hydrogen, organic and potash fertilizers, and other beneficial recycled-material products for use in Hawai'i. As a previous recipient of the Hawai'i Small Business Innovative Research (HSBIR) matching grant award, we recognize the ability of HTDC to accelerate innovation and facilitate local manufacturing initiatives. We have previously used HSBIR funds to cover items that the federal funds cannot cover, such as applying for our first-ever patent, which has now become four international patents, and expanding our workforce development efforts through paid internships. In fact, all SEL full-time employees (three of which are University of Hawai'i graduates) were hired and received technical and career training through our internship program with support from HTDC programming and funds.

Additionally, our SBIR and HSBIR funding made it possible to afford a deeper level of community engagement with the West O'ahu community which resulted in the successful approval and publication of the environmental assessment for the Aloha Sustainable Materials Recycling and Fertilizer Facility (Aloha SMRFF) - a small manufacturing plant we are designing in Campbell Industrial Park to divert over 200 tons per day of construction & demolition waste from landfilling, which along with invasive and pest infested green waste will be converted into fuel and fertilizer for Hawai'i. We have found the requirement to match funding to federal funds awards in the HSBIR program is excellent for leveraging federal agency technical expertise while maintaining a level playing field.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure, and urge your support for this bill.

Sincerely,



Marie-Joelle Simonpietri
President

About Simonpietri Enterprises LLC

Simonpietri Enterprises is a Kailua, Hawaii-based woman- and veteran-owned small business with ten employees, focused on technical innovation and first-of-kind project development of emerging clean and renewable technologies. Since founding in 2006, we have helped dozens of small and large industrial companies in Hawaii, the continental U.S., Australia, and Canada improve the environmental and economic sustainability of their operations through technical and business advice in renewable

energy conversion, waste reduction and re-use, and greenhouse gas lifecycle impact reduction. Simonpietri Enterprises' founder and employees have participated in the strategy, planning, design, financing, development, construction, and energy efficiency/greenhouse gas reduction/sustainability renovation for over \$400 million in new renewable and first-of-kind sustainable fuel projects over the past 15 years. Since launching the Aloha Carbon waste-to-fuel technical development process in August 2020, Simonpietri Enterprises is now developing renewable fuel production facilities in its own right, starting with the Aloha Sustainable Materials Recycling and Fertilizer Facility (SMRFF) in Kapolei, Hawaii to divert wastes generated in Honolulu from landfilling and transform it to renewable fuel, organic fertilizer, and recycled-material building products.



builders | vc

Statement of
Johnny Chankhamany
Executive Director
Builders VC
before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1613
RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

Builders VC strongly **SUPPORTS** HB 1613, which appropriates funds to establish Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist and Marketing and Branding Specialist positions within HTDC. These roles are critical to advancing Hawaii's position as a technology innovation leader in the Pacific, particularly in the blue economy, advanced manufacturing, and cybersecurity sectors.

The addition of an Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist aligns directly with HTDC's mission to foster economic growth through technology. Hawaii's manufacturing sector, while growing, remains underrepresented compared to national averages, accounting for just 2.3% of state GDP versus the U.S. average of 11%. By investing in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity expertise, HTDC can better support local companies in adopting Industry 4.0 technologies, improving supply chain resilience, and mitigating the increasing threat of cyberattacks—a threat that cost U.S. businesses over \$6.9 billion in 2021 alone, according to the FBI.

Builders VC is a venture capital firm based in Hawaii for nearly a decade, with headquarters in San Francisco and regional offices across the globe. Builders has invested millions into several Hawaii-based companies and spends hundreds of thousands annually in Hawaii. HTDC's programs and efforts in the advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity ecosystems are critical in supporting and developing innovative technologies and businesses that Builders would potentially invest in.

In summary, HB1613 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



Statement of
Valerie Harmon
Founder and CEO
Namaka Algae, Inc.
before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1613
RELATING TO THE HAWAII'Ī TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

Namaka Algae, Inc. strongly **SUPPORTS** HB 1613, which appropriates funds to establish Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist and Marketing and Branding Specialist positions within HTDC. These roles are critical to advancing Hawaii's position as a technology innovation leader in the Pacific, particularly in the blue economy, advanced manufacturing, and cybersecurity sectors.

The addition of an Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist aligns directly with HTDC's mission to foster economic growth through technology. Hawaii's manufacturing sector, while growing, remains underrepresented compared to national averages, accounting for just 2.3% of state GDP versus the U.S. average of 11%. By investing in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity expertise, HTDC can better support local companies in adopting Industry 4.0 technologies, improving supply chain resilience, and mitigating the increasing threat of cyberattacks—a threat that cost U.S. businesses over \$6.9 billion in 2021 alone, according to the FBI.

Namaka Algae, Inc. is a technology first company focused on low-cost algae biomass for fish superfoods. We produce in Hawaii for Hawaii markets and plan to expand to the US mainland and globally for larger market access and profitability. Aquaculture has the potential to provide efficient, low carbon footprint protein to feed our growing populations, and at Namaka we aim to support the growth of this industry by providing quality, reliable and nutritious feed ingredients made from microalgae. We support HTDCs programs which benefit



our company greatly. The focus on Marine and Ocean tech and industries is vital to continue the growth and expansion of our industries to support job growth, and ultimately improved food security for our Islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Aloha,

Valerie Harmon

HB-1613

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 7:51:28 AM

Testimony for ECD on 1/30/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer De Rose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Statement of

Jennifer De Rose

Director of Membership, Girl Scouts of Hawai‘i

Founder, Hawai‘i Women in Tech

before the

House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026

10:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In Support of

HB 1613 – Relating to the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer De Rose, and I strongly support HB 1613.

I work every day at the intersection of workforce development, education, and Hawai‘i’s emerging innovation economy—both through Girl Scouts of Hawai‘i, where we build the future pipeline of local talent, and through Hawai‘i Women in Tech, where we support women already working to build careers in this state.

From that vantage point, I want to be very clear: **Hawai‘i does not have a talent problem—we have an opportunity problem.**

We have brilliant, capable, creative people born and raised here who want to stay, build careers here, and contribute to Hawai‘i’s future. But too often, the pathways into high-growth, high-wage fields like advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, and applied technology are fragmented, unclear, or simply unavailable locally.

HB 1613 is exactly the kind of strategic, targeted investment that helps close that gap.

The addition of an Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist and a Marketing and Branding Specialist within HTDC is not just about staffing—it's about **building connective tissue between talent, companies, and opportunity**.

Hawai'i's manufacturing sector currently represents only about 2.3% of our state GDP, compared to roughly 11% nationally. At the same time, cybersecurity threats continue to grow, and local companies—especially small and mid-sized businesses—often lack access to the expertise and support they need to modernize, protect their systems, and compete.

From a workforce perspective, this means:

- Students and early-career professionals don't see clear local career paths
- Companies struggle to find and grow local talent
- And too many of our best and brightest feel they have to leave Hawai'i to build a future

HTDC plays a uniquely important role in bridging these gaps—but only if it has the **specialized capacity** to do so.

These positions will help:

- Translate emerging technologies into real opportunities for local companies
- Support adoption of Industry 4.0 and cybersecurity best practices
- Strengthen the pipeline from education to employment
- And ensure Hawai'i is not just consuming innovation, but **producing and exporting it**

From my work in workforce development, I can tell you this: **when young people can see real careers here, they stay. When companies can grow here, they hire here. And when we align policy, talent, and industry, ecosystems form.**

This bill is ecosystem-building legislation.

It is an investment in resilience, in economic diversification, and in the long-term ability of Hawai'i to offer its people not just jobs—but futures.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 1613.

HB-1613

Submitted on: 1/29/2026 8:50:56 AM

Testimony for ECD on 1/30/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charlie Field	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a worker in an industry that uses advanced manufacturing, I strongly SUPPORT HB 1613, which appropriates funds to establish Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist and Marketing and Branding Specialist positions within HTDC. These roles are critical to advancing Hawaii's position as a technology innovation leader in the Pacific, particularly in the blue economy, advanced manufacturing, and cybersecurity sectors.

The addition of an Advanced Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Specialist aligns directly with HTDC's mission to foster economic growth through technology. Hawaii's manufacturing sector, while growing, remains underrepresented compared to national averages, accounting for just 2.3% of state GDP versus the U.S. average of 11%. By investing in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity expertise, HTDC can better support local companies in adopting Industry 4.0 technologies, improving supply chain resilience, and mitigating the increasing threat of cyberattacks—a threat that cost U.S. businesses over \$6.9 billion in 2021 alone, according to the FBI.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.