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GOVERNOR  
KA KIA'ĀINA

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR  
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



**BRENN A. HASHIMOTO**  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

**BRIAN K. FURUTO**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
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**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**  
**KA 'OIHANA HO'OMŌHALA LIMAHANA**  
235 S. BERETANIA STREET  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

Statement of  
**BRENN A. HASHIMOTO**  
Director, Department of Human Resources Development

Before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS**  
Wednesday, February 4, 2026  
9:00AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

In consideration of  
**HB2573, Relating to Workforce Development**

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and the members of the committee:

The Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) appreciates the intent of HB2573 and offers the following comments.

HB2573 establishes a five-year agriculture and biosecurity workforce development pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i's Leeward Community College and the Department of Human Resources Development.

We are committed to workforce development and training, but the measure does not clearly define our role. Without clarity on our responsibilities, it is difficult to fully commit. We are ready to work with the Legislature to ensure the approach is clear and aligned with existing efforts.

We are available to answer any questions or provide further information as needed.



# 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  
February 4, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

By

Lui Hokoana, Interim Vice President for Community Colleges  
University of Hawai'i System

#### HB 2573 – RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

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

The University of Hawai'i **supports** HB 2573 – Relating to Workforce Development, which would establish a five-year Agriculture and Biosecurity Workforce Development Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB), in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i at Leeward Community College (LeeCC) and the Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD). The UHCCs support this measure because it advances a practical and outcomes-driven approach to strengthening Hawai'i's workforce capacity in agriculture and biosecurity, areas that are essential to the state's resilience, food security, and public health. The pilot's emphasis on curriculum development, hands-on training, and real-world work opportunities aligns with best practices for building career pathways that lead to employment and advancement.

While the UHCCs welcome the partnership with DAB and DHRD, we wish to clarify the collaborative framework. To ensure program success and maintain compliance with institutional accreditation, LeeCC will lead the academic development of the curriculum, ensuring that the 'broad spectrum of topics' mandated in Section 1(b)(1) aligns with established higher education standards and lead to recognized industry credentials. This partnership allows DAB to define the 'what' (the skills needed), while the University defines the 'how' (the instructional delivery).

Furthermore, the UHCCs note that the development of a specialized biosecurity curriculum is a resource-intensive endeavor. To successfully launch this pilot, the UHCCs respectfully requests that the legislature consider a specific appropriation for FY 2026-27 to support specialized faculty and the procurement of necessary training materials. Without a dedicated funding stream, the development of this new career pathway may divert resources from existing programs.[CP1.1]

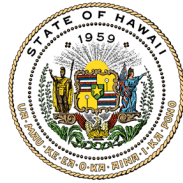
LeeCC is prepared to contribute meaningfully to this effort through its established workforce development infrastructure and experience designing and delivering industry-responsive training. LeeCC's role as an open-access institution also positions the College to serve residents across a range of backgrounds, including working adults and non-traditional learners seeking upskilling, reskilling, and rapid entry into employment.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 2573, as long as its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2573.

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY**  
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**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 SYSTEMS**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2026  
9:00 AM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2573  
RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill No. 2573, relating to workplace development. This measure establishes a five-year agriculture and biosecurity workforce development pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department), in collaboration with the University of Hawaii's Leeward Community College (LCC) and the Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD); and requires a report to the Legislature. The Department supports this bill.

The Department believes that access to a stable, well-trained workforce is the key to maintaining biosecurity efforts across the State. The Department believes that creating a workforce development program developed in conjunction with University of Hawaii Community Colleges, such as the one used by the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement for their officers, enables the Department to do the same for a variety of biosecurity-related roles within the Department. Additionally, this program also has the opportunity to create biosecurity-related capacity outside the Department, increasing the capacity for partners and businesses to also enact biosecurity actions.

Should this measure be passed, the Department is eager to continue working with both DHRD and LCC, who have been supportive of the Department's biosecurity efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

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



MIKE LAMBERT  
Director

ERNEST J. ROBELLO  
Deputy Director  
Administration

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT GOVERNOR  
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**  
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JARED K. REDULLA  
Deputy Director  
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TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2573  
RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
Before the House Committee on  
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS  
Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 9:00 AM  
State Capitol Conference Room 325  
**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

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

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) supports HB2573, which establishes a five-year agriculture and biosecurity workforce development pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB), in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i's Leeward Community College and the Department of Human Resources Development.

The DLE recognizes that developing a skilled agriculture and biosecurity workforce is critical to Hawai'i's food security, economic sustainability, and public safety. DAB is appropriately positioned to serve as the lead agency for this effort, given its regulatory and operational responsibilities in protecting Hawai'i's agricultural resources. At the same time, biosecurity threats intersect with law enforcement missions, including agricultural theft, illegal importation, organized smuggling, and the misuse of supply chains. DLE recommends that the pilot program includes DLE as a collaborating agency, which would allow the State to explore how biosecurity workforce development

may also support DLE's enforcement, intelligence, and technology functions that complement DAB's biosecurity mission.

As part of this pilot, the DLE believes the State could benefit from examining workforce development pathways that support the following:

1. Threat identification and analysis, including the ability to recognize emerging biosecurity risks, patterns of illegal activity, and vulnerabilities within agricultural and supply-chain systems
2. Field-level investigative and enforcement support, focused on agricultural and biosecurity-related offenses that require coordinated regulatory and law enforcement response
3. Technology and data-enabled detection capabilities, including the use of modern tools to improve monitoring, targeting, and early warning of biosecurity threats.

As DLE continues to develop its agricultural enforcement unit, it sees this pilot program as an opportunity to align education, workforce development, and operational needs across agencies. This collaborative approach will enhance the State's long-term ability to protect Hawai'i's agricultural resources and respond effectively to evolving biosecurity challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



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February 4, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

**TESTIMONY ON HB 2573**  
RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference  
9:00 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 2573**, which establishes a five-year agriculture and biosecurity workforce development pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, in collaboration with the University of Hawaii's Leeward Community College and the Department of Human Resources Development.

Workforce shortages remain one of the most significant challenges facing Hawai'i agriculture and biosecurity. Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers continue to age, and many multigenerational operations face uncertainty due to the lack of a trained next generation prepared to enter agricultural and biosecurity careers. Without intentional workforce development efforts, agricultural lands risk falling out of production, increasing Hawai'i's reliance on imported food, and weakening our biosecurity system.

HFB also notes that both agricultural operations and agricultural agencies face increasing difficulty recruiting qualified candidates due to the specialized education, training, and background experience required for many positions. Farming and ranching jobs today often demand technical skills in equipment operation, pest and disease management, compliance, and safety, while positions within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity require scientific, regulatory, or inspection expertise that can be difficult to fill. These workforce gaps highlight the need for targeted training programs that prepare candidates with the skills necessary to succeed in agriculture and biosecurity careers.

HFB has consistently supported initiatives that strengthen agricultural education, training, and career pathways. Prior workforce efforts have demonstrated the importance of

hands-on learning, internships, and clear pathways into employment. HB 2573 builds on these principles by emphasizing practical training, collaboration with educational institutions, and alignment with workforce needs within agriculture and biosecurity.

HFB also supports the pilot structure of this program. A defined timeframe allows the State to evaluate outcomes, identify best practices, and make informed decisions about long-term workforce investments. Continued engagement with farmers, ranchers, and industry stakeholders will be essential to ensure that training programs remain relevant and responsive to on-the-ground needs.

Developing a skilled agricultural and biosecurity workforce is critical to growing agriculture in Hawai'i and achieving statewide goals such as doubling local food production, strengthening farm-to-school programs, diversifying the economy, and protecting natural resources. HB 2573 represents an important step toward addressing the workforce challenges that must be overcome to reach these objectives.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



February 2, 2026

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

Subject: **HB2573**, Relating to Workforce Development

Aloha,

I am writing in **support of HB2573**, which establishes a five-year agriculture and biosecurity workforce development pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB), in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i's Leeward Community College (LCC) and the Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD). The goal of the program is to equip interested students with the necessary entry-level knowledge, skill set, expertise, and advancement potential in the field of agriculture and biosecurity.

Currently, those in the agriculture field are faced with many challenges, including land costs, financing challenges, and lack of workforce development for the agricultural sector. The pilot program would focus on workforce development by: (1) creating specialized curriculum; (2) providing practical, hands-on training and work opportunities; and (3) incentivizing additional training and credential attainment through compensation to students who work in biosecurity.

Another financial strain for many is the cost of higher education. The resident tuition cost per credit at Leeward Community College is \$131<sup>1</sup>. At the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, resident tuition cost is \$480<sup>2</sup> per credit – about 270% of the cost at LCC. Implementing this pilot program at LCC would provide more affordable and accessible opportunities for students across the island.

I urge this committee to **pass HB2573**, which will establish a five-year agriculture and biosecurity workforce development pilot program between DAB and LCC, enhancing the quality of emerging workers.

Mahalo,  
Sydney Haas & the Food+ Policy Team  
#fixourfoodsystem

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<sup>1</sup> "Tuition and Fees," Leeward Community College, November 7, 2025, <https://www.leeward.hawaii.edu/tuition/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Tuition & Fees for 2025-2026 Academic Year," Office of the registrar, <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/registrar/tuition-fees/undergraduate/>.

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**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.



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Natalie Urminka  
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 HB2573.**

HFU supports efforts to enhance local workforce capabilities in agriculture and biosecurity, recognizing the importance of equipping future generations with necessary skills to sustain and grow Hawaii's agricultural sector.

To fully realize the objectives of this program, we recommend expanding stakeholder involvement to include representatives from local farming communities and agricultural organizations in the program's planning and implementation phases. This inclusion can ensure the curriculum and training opportunities align with real-world agricultural needs and challenges in Hawaii.

With the recommended amendments, the program can significantly impact local community resilience, sustainable agriculture, and biosecurity innovation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union