

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026
3:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2098
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION**

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2098 that establishes a Clean Plant Program (CPP) within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to support the production, maintenance, and distribution of disease-free, clean plant material to growers, nurseries, and other agricultural producers in the state and appropriates funds. The Department supports this bill.

The Department is mandated to double local food production by 2030 as per Act 151/2019, and supports the Farm-to-State Local Food Purchasing milestones for 2035, 2040, 2045 and 2050, Hawaii Revised Statutes 27-8 that mandates that a percentage of food purchased for public schools, hospitals and other entities must consist of fresh local agricultural products and local value-added, processed agricultural food products. This bill supports achieving the mandated milestones.

This bill addresses the cost and availability of growing materials – seeds, keiki, saplings – and will kick-start production for beginning farmers and/or farmers wanting to scale up. The purpose of the bill is to establish repositories where reliable seeds and/or starter plants would be produced and distributed to Hawaii agricultural producers. The cost would be discounted in exchange for data from the participating farmers and nursery operations, which will be shared with industry as a resource for planting decisions.

The CPP will help farmers recover from disasters that destroy their crops and homeowners who want to grow food for subsistence. Additionally, CPP will partner with

state agencies that encourage food production and non-profit programs that seek to increase food production.

The Hawaii Clean Plant Initiative would establish repositories located in each county where seeds, plantlets, keiki, and grafts would be available for distribution to farmers, ranchers, and growers. The grow-out would take place at the facility using tissue culture, grafting, and/or method best suited for the commodity and be specific to the microclimate of the area.

The project would begin with varieties that have been successfully propagated in Hawaii:

- Bunchy Top Virus-free and Tolerant Bananas
- Ring Spot Virus Resistant Papaya
- High-yielding okra, mamaki tea, ginger, turmeric, green onion, cilantro, celery
- Taro
- Legumes
- Virus Free Sweet Potato Cuttings

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



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January 28, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 2098
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
3:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, 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 SB 2098, which establishes a Clean Plant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to support the production, maintenance, and distribution of disease-free, clean plant material for growers, nurseries, and other agricultural producers in the State.

Having access to clean plant material, effective agricultural treatments, diagnostics, and pest management tools is a critical component of Hawai'i's biosecurity system. Clean plant material allows producers to begin production with a clean slate, reducing the risk of introducing pests and diseases into farms, fields, and ranches, and minimizing the spread of contaminants to other crops and operations.

Clean plant programs also help ensure that Hawai'i's agricultural industry can ship and provide pest- and disease-free plants and products. This is essential not only for protecting local farms, but also for maintaining consumer confidence and meeting regulatory and market requirements. Once crops are established, continued access to diagnostics and pest management tools is necessary to maintain plant health and productivity over time.

Access to clean plant materials enables farmers to increase production, improve yields, and expand operations with greater confidence. In a state where pests and diseases can spread rapidly and where production costs are already high, preventing problems before they start is far more effective and economical than responding after an outbreak occurs.

Invasive species continue to pose one of the greatest threats to Hawai'i's agricultural sector. Each year, new pests and diseases are introduced, placing farmers and ranchers at risk and undermining the State's goals of increasing local food production and self-sufficiency. A well-supported Clean Plant Program is a proactive investment that strengthens Hawai'i's broader biosecurity efforts and supports long-term agricultural viability.

SB 2098 represents a sound investment in agriculture and provides meaningful support to farmers, nurseries, and agricultural producers across the State. By establishing this program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, the State can help protect existing agricultural operations, encourage responsible expansion, and reinforce Hawai'i's commitment to strong biosecurity practices.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Officers

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State President

Christian Zuckerman
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
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Chapter Presidents

Kelii Gannet
Kohala, Hawai'i

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Mason Scharer
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahālāwai,
Maui

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Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i



Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Environment 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 SB2098.**

SB2098 is an important initiative that aims to enhance the agricultural landscape of Hawaii by establishing a Clean Plant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity. This program will ensure that farmers, nurseries, and other agricultural producers have access to disease-free, clean plant material. By reducing the incidence of plant diseases, the program will help increase crop yields and quality, improving food security and supporting local economies.

The appropriation of funds towards this program signals significant support for our local agricultural community, encouraging both existing and new farmers to invest in diverse, high-quality crops. With healthier plants, producers can minimize losses and reduce the necessity for chemical interventions, promoting an environmentally-friendly approach to farming.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heaivilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair

Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

SB2098

RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Wednesday, January 28, 2026, 3:00 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports SB2098** which establishes a Clean Plant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to support the production, maintenance, and distribution of disease-free, clean plant material to growers, nurseries, and other agricultural producers in the State.

We support this measure to establish a program that prioritizes inspection of plant material for invasive species and propagating disease-free plant material within the state. This is a step in the right direction – to minimize the importation of plant material to the state, which will also reduce the chances of introducing invasive species and diseases. Invasive species cause immense economical burden on agricultural producers who already struggle to carve out a thin profit margin. Invasive pests like the Twolined Spittlebug are transported in soil and plant material and it should become common biosecurity practice to inspect and clean all material and vehicles, especially if it is coming from an infested area.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Ranchers produce a high-quality protein and are the stewards of almost 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or nearly 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Managing Director



SB-2098

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 11:32:05 AM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Austin "Shiloh" Martin	Testifying for Libertarian Party of Hawaii	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and committee members. I am Austin Martin, Chair of the Libertarian Party of Hawaii, testifying in strong opposition to SB 2098 (Clean Plant Program).

SB 2098 creates a state-administered clean plant certification program within the Department of Agriculture, centralizing control over nursery stock and imposing new compliance costs on private growers. Once again, "biosecurity" is the code word for "tyranny" and "government control".

Taxpayers bear the expense while private certification markets are displaced. The economic & agricultural rights of individuals and local business will be severely eroded, causing more cost distortions and unintended consequences. This suggestion is radical, dangerous, and foolishly impractical. It could even lead to criminalizing and regulating ordinary behavior of law abiding citizens which poses no serious risk to public health or biosecurity — except, perhaps in the imagination of misanthropic control-freaks. This could potentially prevent my own rural neighborhood from operating a compost or mulch pile without permission from the government. It's absurd.

I recommend defeating this bill to prevent further bureaucratic intrusion into voluntary biosecurity practices. Repeal the biosecurity take-over bill from last session, and please never seriously consider any proposition like this one again.

The constitution exists for a reason, and the fundamental rights of people to engage in agriculture should not need a specific amendment to protect it from ivory-tower policymakers who have no concept of how much their utopianism is killing us already.

Mahalo for opposing this absurd and offensive overreach.

Austin Martin

Libertarian Party



THE SENATE
KA 'AHA KENEKOA
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

Wednesday, January 28, 2026
3:00 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

RE: SB2098 – Relating to Agricultural Production

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) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB2098**, which establishes a Clean Plant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to support the production, maintenance, and distribution of disease-free, clean plant material to growers, nurseries, and other agricultural producers in the State.

This bill is strongly needed in Hawaii for our Agriculture to be able to export our goods throughout the state, to the mainland and to the world. This will help to provide our industry to be able to ship pest and disease free products. We would be able to meet the standards necessary for shipping.

The floriculture industry understands the impact and problems that are caused by invasive species and how they can negatively affect our industry, environment, and community. That is why it is important that we do our part in the ongoing battle against invasive pests, a problem that needs an “all hands on deck” approach. We need to have pest management systems available to protect our environment and those we share our products with.

There are no easy answers to pest and disease control and our best option is to always start with clean material. Clean plant programs allows us to start with growing material that is effectively a ‘clean slate’ where we can control pests and disease at a fresh starting point. We are able to control the growing environment and have pest/disease management that is preventive, instead of reactive to a breakout. This also allows our industry to focus on growing quality products with high yields.

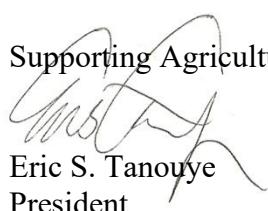


We would like to see agriculture continue as a viable industry in Hawaii and believe this grant program is a good investment into Hawaii's future.

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

SB-2098

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 7:19:08 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Bence	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha

Please support this bill to propagate clean plants through Hawai'i Nei.

Mahalo

Rob



Restore the Commons

Wednesday, January 28, 20265, 3:00 pm

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

SENATE BILL 2098 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Position: Support Intent; seek clarification of Senate's understanding.

Me ke Aloha, Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

SB2098 establishes a Clean Plant Program to support disease-free agriculture in Hawaii. This description seems to echo the basic mission of DAB. Given the scourge of pests impacting Hawaii agriculture, this initiative is encouraging. Is it intended to clarify or add crucial support to this crucial department mission? Our earnest hope is that this bill will add essential working funds and positions to strengthen the mission.

Mahalo for the opportunity to address this issue,

/s/ Charley Ice, Hoa'āina, Waimalu, O'ahu;
retired Hydrologist, Commission on Water Resource Management (25 years) and Planner at DHHL (10 years);
former Chair of O'ahu Democratic Party Region 5 ('Aiea-Pearl City);

SB-2098

Submitted on: 1/26/2026 7:06:40 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Bohlen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT!

Clean plant material needed for biosecurity.