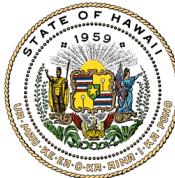


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

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
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI A KIA'I MEAOLA
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9560 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**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. 2126
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL GRANTS**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2126 that establishes the Conventional Farming Grant Program to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to provide grants to small and midsized farmers who practice conventional farming and appropriates funds. The Department supports the intent of the bill and offers comments.

Providing grant funding to small and midsized farms that utilize conventional farming methods supports the Department's mandate to increase food production, decrease imports, and moves Hawaii toward food sustainability. The Department's comments relate to the intent and management of the grant program.

The bill is unclear as to the purpose of the grant program, grant amount limits, permitted uses of grant funds and any reporting requirements for the program. As currently drafted, an applicant would not be limited to the amount of grant funding and would not need to specify how grant funds would be expended. Providing grant limits would make the program more equitable and having permitted uses for grant funds will help provide direction to the Board of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

Supporting farmers who utilize conventional farming practices will acknowledge that they are often not able to participate in other programs, however, are currently responsible for the vast majority agricultural production in the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the grant program and respectfully requesting consideration of the comments.



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 28, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 2126
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL GRANTS

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 2126, which establishes the Conventional Farming Grant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to provide grants to small and midsized farmers who predominately practice conventional farming.

HFB represents farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers across the State and is committed to supporting all sectors of agriculture. Conventional farming plays a vital role in ensuring food security, sustaining rural economies, and strengthening Hawai'i's overall agricultural capacity.

Small and midsized farmers are the backbone of Hawai'i's agricultural industry. However, they face significant challenges, including high input costs, labor shortages, rising energy and transportation expenses, and limited access to capital. SB 2126 will provide targeted financial support to help alleviate these pressures, allowing farmers to invest in productivity, efficiency, and long-term viability.

Conventional farming remains one of the most efficient and reliable ways to produce large quantities of food to meet the needs of Hawai'i's communities. These operations are essential to maintaining a stable and diverse local food supply, particularly as Hawai'i works to reduce reliance on imported food and strengthen food self-sufficiency.

Agriculture is a critical contributor to Hawai'i's economy, supporting jobs, rural communities, and local supply chains. By providing grants to small and midsized conventional farms, this program will stimulate economic activity, encourage continued

agricultural use of land, and support the State's broader goals of increasing local food production.

SB 2126 is an important step toward recognizing and supporting the contributions of conventional farming to Hawai'i's food system, economy, and rural communities. We respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure and provide the necessary resources to help Hawai'i's farmers continue to feed our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Christian Zuckerman
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Chapter Presidents

Kelii Gannet
Kohala, Hawai'i

East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Ka'ū, Hawai'i

Maureen Datta
Kona, Hawai'i

Gina Lind
Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahālāwai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Kilia Avelino-Purdy
Moloka'i

Negus Manna
Lāna'i

India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Rachel LaDrig
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 offers comments on SB2126.**

HFU recognizes the myriad hardships faced by agricultural producers across the state. However, this bill currently lacks a preamble or findings section clarifying the challenges it seeks to address through the Conventional Farming Grant Program. Without a stated purpose, it is unclear how this grant program aligns with broader state objectives for agriculture, sustainability, or climate resilience.

The bill's exclusion of farms using organic seeds or practices is especially concerning. By defining "conventional farming" in a way that omits producers committed to organic or regenerative methods, the measure risks marginalizing those who are advancing the very environmental protections enshrined in Article XI of the Hawaii State Constitution and the state's commitments under the Aloha+ Challenge.

Recommended Amendments:Inclusivity for Organic and Sustainable Farmers

HFU supports diverse farming practices that contribute to ecological resilience, food security, and community well-being. We recommend expanding grant eligibility to include farms using sustainable, organic, or regenerative methods. This would align the program with Hawaii's constitutional environmental mandates and state-level climate and sustainability goals.

Clarify Grant Use Parameters

To ensure funds meet real and measurable agricultural needs, the bill should specify allowable uses of grant funds. Examples may include:

- Infrastructure and irrigation improvements
- Equipment upgrades
- Soil health and nutrient management practices
- Adoption of climate-smart or water-conserving techniques

This clarity would help prevent misuse and improve accountability and impact assessment.

HFU encourages amendments that reflect a more inclusive and environmentally responsible vision for Hawaii's agricultural future.

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

SB2126

RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

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 SB2126** which establishes the Conventional Farming Grant Program to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to provide grants to small and midsized farmers who practice conventional farming.

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council supports all forms of responsible agriculture practices, including conventional farming and ranching. It is important to ensure that small and midsized farmers have access to grant funding. We encourage the administration of this grant to be conducive to small and midsized farms, who don't often have extra personnel to commit to rigorous reporting, but can still utilize grant funds in responsible ways.

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-2126

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 11:38:43 AM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Austin 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 opposition to SB 2126 (Conventional Farming Grant Program).

SB 2126 appropriates funds for grants to conventional farming operations, directly transferring wealth from taxpayers to selected recipients based on administrative criteria rather than consumer demand.

Such handouts foster inefficiency and political allocation of resources. I recommend rejecting this program and moving toward complete elimination of agricultural subsidies, while legalizing basic property rights.

Want more farms? Stop forcing Hawaiians ask permission to build a shed or change their own land. Our nanny-state building codes are some of the strictest and most asinine in the world, and it is not serving us, especially in the outer islands. Grants won't fix that problem, but they will reward insiders.

Mahalo for your kokua to this matter.

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: SB2126 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL GRANTS

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 Senate Bill 2126** which establishes the Conventional Farming Grant Program to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to provide grants to small and midsized farmers who practice conventional farming. Appropriates funds.

There has been an increased need for grants, resulting from a decrease in direct Federal appropriations for agriculture. Our growers and producers of small and midsized farmers need help to remain a viable business option for our future generations. We currently have an "aging farmer" problem and we need to start embracing options that will help new growers and farmers enter agriculture.

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-2126

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 7:26:42 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

Please amend or reject this bill. There is not a grant that is only for organic farming. Conventional farming doesn't benefit the surrounding environment or cost additional federal fees like organic has to pay for certification. We would be the only place in the world to not only allow the worlds largest chemical corporations to not only not pay any GE taxes but to pay farmers who spray restricted use chemicals a grant as well. Please don't support this or at least amend it to prioritize organic farmers as they need the help.

Mahalo

Rob



Restore the Commons

Wednesday, January 28, 20265, 3:00 pm

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

SENATE BILL 2126 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL GRANTS

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 grant program for farmers who practice conventional farming. The definition clarifies that this will include those not certified as organic, but also excludes those genetically altered through biotechnology.

Because Hawaii is deep in food insecurity, it is essential that we, the people, support local agricultural food production to the greatest possible extent. This includes products that are available in harvested form or in value-added form, and may include some that can earn a premium as an export to help the bottom line.

Both small- and medium-sized agricultural operations have endless challenges to earn a living, so it is essential that grant-making also be supported by application assistance. It is also worth determining whether a multitude of grant programs require additional staff.

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-2126

Submitted on: 1/23/2026 5:00:27 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
penny levin	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this measure. This bill defines "conventional farming" as "growing crops from seeds that have been genetically altered using any traditional breeding method, excluding biotechnology, and that are not certified as organic."

As Hawaii has experienced "conventional farming" it also includes tilling plastic weed mat and irrigation tubing into the aina, and using chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides that impoverish our soils and cause erosion and polluted runoff to our streams and reefs.

I do not support my tax dollars going to pay for hybrid/genetically altered seed (I note that "traditional methods" have not been defined in this bill) or continuing the environmentally unsound agriculture practices and inputs of "conventional agriculture".

If someone wants to continue with those kinds of practices - pay for it yourselves! If you want to use genetically altered seed - let the industry pay for it. We're already paying the price for cleaning up 150 years of conventional agriculture mess on the land and on our reefs. And, many families have paid a steep price with their health for living near such farms, particularly those of the seed industry. We haven't forgotten. Haven't we learned our lesson by now? A'ole SB2126.

If this bill was for a grant program that helped conventional farmers transition to regenerative agriculture, then you might have my attention and support.

SB-2126

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 6:23:33 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

While I want to support local farmers, I respectfully **OPPOSE** this bill as drafted. The bill should not pass with its current definition of "conventional farming."

This bill would provide grants for "conventional farming," which it defines as "growing crops from seeds that have been genetically altered using any traditional breeding method, excluding biotechnology, and that are not certified as organic. This definition is both too broad and too narrow.

The State should not be making grants for genetically altered seed farming instead of encouraging additional certified organic farming.

Mahalo!