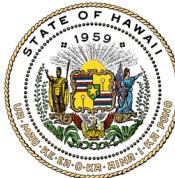


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

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

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

**SENATE BILL NO. 2160
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2160. The bill clarifies the beekeeper registration process, requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to provide guidance and support to registered beekeepers and establishes a limitation on liability for registered beekeepers following industry standards and best practices. The bill includes an appropriation.

The Hawaii Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity strongly supports this measure and offers comments. Honeybees play a vital role in agriculture, Hawaii's honey production totaled \$4,129,000 based on the 2021 USDA NASS data and queen bee production is valued at \$18-\$20 million with approximately 500,000 queen bees being exported out of the state. The Department's apiary program suffered loss of personnel positions and operating funds during the COVID slowdown. Revitalizing the program will provide greater support and guidance to this important industry.

The Department comments that a clearer definition for the "flyover barrier" be provided including what constitutes an adequate barrier and minimum required heights to provide clarity for beekeepers and the department. Subsection (8) encourages year-round blooming foliage, however many commercial beekeepers "chase the bloom" rather than maintain stationary yards making it difficult to comply with the requirement and may encourage the planting of invasive flowering plants that bloom year-round. Subsection (9) regarding requeening makes sense conceptually but in practice smaller beekeeping operations may have difficulty acquiring new queen bees especially during certain times of the year when queen bees are being exported to meet contracts and

Testimony of Sharon Hurd

January 28, 2026

Page 2

due to import restrictions making it difficult to purchase queens. These operations may fall out of compliance due to timing rather than management decisions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure,

SB-2160

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 2:11:08 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Han Lau	Testifying for Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

The Department has already submitted a testimony. I am standing by online for questions as a subject matter expert. Thank you.

SB-2160

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 2:45:02 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stacey Chun	Testifying for Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

The Department has already submitted testimony, I am available for questions as a subject matter expert, Thank you,

Stacey



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 2160
RELATING TO BEEKEEPING

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 the intent of SB 2160, which clarifies the registration process for beekeepers with the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, requires the Department to provide guidance and support to registered beekeepers to help them adhere to industry standards and best management practices, and establishes a limitation on liability for registered beekeepers who act in good faith.

Beekeeping plays a vital role in Hawai'i's agricultural ecosystem. Bees are essential pollinators for many crops, and their health and management directly affect agricultural productivity and food security. Beekeeping also contributes to local economies through honey production, queen bee breeding, and other value-added products.

HFB recognizes the importance of supporting beekeepers as they address ongoing challenges, including pests such as varroa mites and small hive beetles. Providing guidance, education, and technical assistance through the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity can help strengthen the industry while improving biosecurity and pollination outcomes statewide.

While HFB supports the intent of SB 2160, we respectfully encourage the Legislature to ensure that its implementation does not create unreasonable restrictions or regulatory burdens for beekeepers. The registration process should be straightforward and accessible, particularly for small-scale and hobbyist beekeepers who provide important pollination services. Industry standards and best management practices should be

flexible enough to reflect the diversity of beekeeping operations and conditions across the State.

HFB believes SB 2160 has the potential to strengthen Hawai'i's beekeeping industry, support pollination for local agriculture, and promote responsible and sustainable practices. We encourage an implementation approach that emphasizes education, collaboration, and support, rather than enforcement or punitive measures.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our input on this measure.

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

My name is Katie Metzger. I am a full-time beekeeper on O‘ahu and the founder of Hānai Hives, a beekeeping education and host-a-hive program operating on the North Shore.

I support SB2160 and appreciate this bill’s acknowledgement that bees and pollinators play a critically important role in Hawai‘i’s food supply, agriculture, and ecosystem health. As someone who works with honeybees year-round, I believe this measure will help protect and strengthen Hawai‘i’s beekeeping industry.

I am particularly encouraged by the bill’s focus on the reestablishment of a robust apiary program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity. Hawai‘i’s unique climate and geographic isolation make biosecurity especially important. I have long been concerned about the lack of safeguards in place to prevent invasive species threats, including Africanized honeybees.

In the past, Hawai‘i had an apiary unit within the Department of Agriculture. Full-time beekeepers were tasked with monitoring ports of entry and maintaining swarm traps so that bees arriving on ships could be identified and euthanized before becoming established. That proactive approach no longer exists, and its absence leaves Hawai‘i’s beekeeping industry vulnerable.

We have already seen the consequences of insufficient biosecurity through the coconut rhinoceros beetle. Its spread has devastated coconut trees statewide, and the resulting pesticide responses have had harmful impacts on honeybee populations. This underscores the importance of prevention, early detection, and dedicated staffing—exactly the type of work envisioned through the apiary program outlined in this bill. I respectfully encourage the Legislature to consider ensuring that future appropriations explicitly support biosecurity efforts at ports of entry, including early detection and rapid response for invasive bee species.

I also support the clarification of the beekeeper registration process. A well-maintained registry would provide researchers at the University of Hawai‘i and beyond with the data they have long sought to better understand issues such as Varroa mite impacts in an island environment. Accurate, confidential data collection supports better science, better management, and better outcomes for bees and agriculture.

As a professional beekeeper, I hold myself to a set of best management practices that I have developed through experience, education, and collaboration. At the same time, I respect that there are many paths in beekeeping. I appreciate that this bill supports responsible beekeepers while providing guidance, education, and reasonable liability protections for those acting in good faith.

Mahalo for your consideration and for your commitment to strengthening Hawai‘i’s agricultural biosecurity and beekeeping industry.

Me ke aloha,

Katie Metzger
Founder, Hānai Hives
Full-Time Beekeeper, O‘ahu

SB-2160

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 11:59:59 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 2160 (Agricultural Markets/Beekeeping).

SB 2160 establishes further studies and regulatory structures for beekeeping markets, increasing administrative oversight and compliance expenses on voluntary exchanges. It is yet another attempt to justify parasitic, top-down controls and an attack on the agricultural freedoms and economic rights of Hawaiians.

Market participants require freedom, not government frameworks. I recommend rejecting this bill to avoid new restrictions on agricultural enterprise.

Mahalo for opposing this bill.

Austin Martin

Libertarian Party



665 Walea Pl; Honolulu, HI 96817

808-206-6565; nalomelihoney808@gmail.com

Re: SB2160: Related to Beekeeping

To Whom It May Concern,

I write this letter to Oppose SB2160 in its current form.

I support the Senate in their interest in supporting the beekeeping industry. Honey was once one of the top export products for the State, and fell apart in the 1920s because of the introduction of a pest. The same happened in 2009 with the Varroa mite and 2012 with the small hive beetle. Biosecurity is a top concern.

What isn't a top concern is registration. It is unclear what kind of information control would be in place for this information, if it would be used mostly against the industry rather than in support. The Dept of Ag has not necessarily been an ally over the years, and revealing sensitive location information without strict information sharing protocols might increase competition in an already competitive environment for space (bees need nectar).

The best practices, while well meaning, open up beekeepers to more lawsuits not fewer. Some of them are nebulous and less in control (a hive can swarm for all kinds of reasons) to the beekeeper.

What we do need:

- Better protection at ports from Africanized bees and bee diseases/pests.
- Locations to keep bees on O'ahu in particular are dwindling quickly. What was once a productive industry always feels threatened, and the Big Island becomes the only place for scalable honey production.
- Less threats of lawsuits from having bees on ag land from gentleman farmers who are not happy with agriculture in their neighborhoods.

I would support this bill if registration were optional, and if we can focus on biosecurity preventing unwanted bee and insect pests from our islands.

Nalo Meli Honey has been in operation on O'ahu since 2004, and held hives through the island. We are active in Hawaii Farm Bureau and provide numerous opportunities for collaboration with the tourist industry and other small food businesses.

Sincerely,

Kim Falinski
Owner
Nalo Meli Honey



January 26, 2026

To: Chair Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Senator Tim Richards, and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Subject: **SB2160**, Relating to Beekeeping

Aloha,

I am writing in **support** of **SB2160 with comments**. This measure aims to: (1) clarify the registration process with the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) for beekeepers; (2) require DAB to define best management practices and support beekeepers in adhering to them through the establishment of an apiary program and apiarist positions; and (3) establish a limitation on liability for any registered beekeepers that follow best management practices.

The practice of beekeeping has a long, rich history in Hawai'i, dating back to the 1850s, when honey bees were first used to pollinate Kiawe for cattle feed¹. Since then, honey and the practice of queen rearing have become multimillion-dollar industries; honey averaging ~\$3-4 million annually², and queen rearing averaging ~\$10 million annually³. Beekeepers' experience levels and size of operations vary, but regardless, declining honey bee health and resilience can be attributed to differing management practices across all apiaries statewide. Addressing such an issue is a team effort and requires all beekeepers to do their part.

As there is no singular way to manage bees, it is important to outline the core responsibilities that beekeepers have to ensure the future of honey bees and beekeeping. As new research is conducted, **beekeeping practices must adapt, and this measure should not limit a transition towards a more sustainable industry**. Thus, **I propose the following changes:** (1) a change in language that broadens *swarm prevention* to instead be *swarm management*; and (2) the practice of re-queening colonies should consider additional genetic traits, such as natural pest/disease resistance and hygienic behaviors, rather than temperament alone.

I urge this committee to pass SB2160 with suggested changes, which will support both our beekeeping industries and all local, small-scale beekeepers across the state. Incentivising registration and adherence to clearly defined best management practices promotes unity among

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2026, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.

¹[Eckert, J. E., & Bess, H. A. \(1955\). Fundamentals of Beekeeping in Hawaii. University of Hawaii](#)

²[Statistics on Honey and Bee Colonies \(2017-2021\)](#)

³[National Honey Bee Survey](#)



beekeepers of all experience levels and will provide essential data to help make evidence-based decisions on the future of beekeeping as a practice.

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

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²[Statistics on Honey and Bee Colonies \(2017-2021\)](#)

³[National Honey Bee Survey](#)

SB-2160

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 7:36:55 AM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Harmeyer	Testifying for oahu beekeepers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is a good bill

SB-2160

Submitted on: 1/23/2026 4:13:11 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Bishop	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Committee Members,

I strongly support this common sense bill that will help provide much needed support and structured guidance for Hawaii's critically important beekeepers.

Please pass this bill.

With Aloha,

Lisa Bishop

Oahu resident, homeowner, voter, tax payer

SB-2160

Submitted on: 1/26/2026 10:05:59 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nelson Faulkner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. I have been a beekeeper for 5 years and currently maintain 15!hives in windward Oahu. Thank you.

SB-2160

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 12:53:24 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jayde Addison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Senator Tim Richards, and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

My name is Jayde Addison, a beekeeper from 'Ewa.

I am writing in **support of SB2160 with comments**. As a young beekeeper with 4 years of experience, I would like to see more resources for people getting into the trade, and encourage those who are younger in age to consider it a viable career path. This bill will help with that and also unify beekeeping practices across the state. Prioritizing honey bee health is essential for the future of beekeeping. Please consider my suggestions:

(1) broadening the scope of swarm prevention to swarm management;

and (2) including natural pest/disease resistance and hygienic behaviors as factors for re-queening colonies (not just temperament)

These two suggestions reflect the responsibilities we have as beekeepers, not only to the general public but also to other beekeepers and the industry as a whole. As we learn about new techniques and philosophies through current research, it is vital that we also shift industry standards to more sustainable ones, not simply making small beekeepers conform to conventional practices.

I urge the Senate committee to **pass SB2160 with suggestions** and continue to work with local beekeeping associations and leading bee researchers to inform your decisions.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Jayde

SB-2160

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 7:22:11 PM
Testimony for AEN on 1/28/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mitchell Tynanes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.
Mahalo!

Mitchell Tynanes
bee keeper Oahu

Tynanes bee farms