

**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  
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2026  
3:00 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2309  
RELATING TO THE AGRICULTURAL LOANS**

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

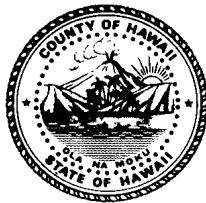
Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2309. The bill requires the Agricultural Loan Division to sell a specified portion of its loan portfolio to permitted third parties with proceeds deposited into the agricultural loan revolving fund. Appropriates funds out of the agricultural loan revolving fund to increase its expenditure ceiling. The Department supports the bill and offers comments.

Access to affordable capital is a key component to agricultural development and increasing food self-sufficiency for Hawaii. The current budgetary ceiling limit of \$5.0 million for the agricultural loan program is proving insufficient to meet current loan demand and hinders farmers ability to start, expand, or improve their agricultural operations. The option of selling a portion of the loan portfolio will bring in new capital without the need for additional general funds and makes economic sense.

The department is concerned that the requirement to sell a specified amount of its loan portfolio may result in inequitable terms for the state and limits its negotiating power with potential buyers. Also, in the unlikely event that a qualified buyer cannot be located in a timely manner the program will be responsible for not being in compliance with the statute. The department respectfully requests that consideration be given to the language in HB2216 which provides the authority for the program to sell its loans but does not make it a requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.  
Mayor



Benson Medina  
Director

Dennis Lin  
Deputy Director

## County of Hawai'i DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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February 3, 2026  
HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
WEDNESDAY, February 4, 2026  
3:00 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 224

TESTIMONY ON SB 2309  
Relating to Agricultural Loans

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

I am Benson Medina, Director of the Department of Research and Development, County of Hawai'i. One of the agricultural objectives of this department is to support collaboration, innovation, resource development, and programmatic sustainability throughout the food system to reduce food waste, improve producer viability and resilience, develop workforce development pathways, or increase access to locally produced food among low-income residents.

The County of Hawai'i provides written testimony in **SUPPORT of SB2309 with comments** to require the Agricultural Loan Division to sell portions of its loan portfolio to permitted third parties, with proceeds to be deposited into the agricultural loan revolving fund, as well as appropriate funds out of the Agricultural Loan Revolving Fund to increase its expenditure ceiling and thereby expand access to agricultural loan financing and support local food production.

We support the increase in the Agricultural Loan Revolving Fund's expenditure ceiling. Access to capital is one of the top five issues restricting economic viability for Hawai'i farmers (HDOA, 2024). Farmers' most frequently identified solution for accessing capital is low-interest loans or grants (Hawaii Farmer Needs Assessment, 2018). The loan program modifications in Act 69 (2025) offer higher loan limits and favorable interest rates to encourage farmers and ranchers to expand their current operations. The increase to the Agricultural Loan Revolving Fund proposed in SB2309 will help producers expand operations to assist the state in becoming more self-sufficient in food production.

We provide comments requesting that page 2, lines 7-10 in SB2309 be amended to the language of HB2216 (page 1, lines 14-16): "Authorize the department of agriculture and biosecurity to package and sell a portion of its loan portfolio to permitted third parties." This edit will provide the Division with flexibility to make appropriate loan portfolio choices for different seasons of loan demand. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of SB2309 with comments**.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benson Medina".

Benson Medina  
Director



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e-mail [info@hfbf.org](mailto:info@hfbf.org); [www.hfbf.org](http://www.hfbf.org)

February 4, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**TESTIMONY ON SB 2309**  
RELATING TO AFRICULTURAL LOANS

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 2309**, which expands lending capacity within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity's Agricultural Loan Division by authorizing the sale of a portion of its loan portfolio and increasing the expenditure ceiling of the agricultural loan revolving fund.

Access to affordable capital remains one of the most significant challenges facing farmers and ranchers in Hawai'i. While Act 69 of 2025 expanded access to agricultural loans at favorable interest rates, demand has quickly exceeded available funding. As noted in the bill's findings, within a short period, the Agricultural Loan Division approved nearly \$5,000,000 in loans and received additional unfunded applications that were placed on hold due to the revolving fund's annual ceiling. This underscores the strong need for expanded financing options for agricultural producers.

SB 2309 provides a practical, fiscally responsible approach to increasing lending capacity by allowing the Agricultural Loan Division to reinvest proceeds from the sale of a portion of its existing loan portfolio into the revolving fund. This approach leverages existing assets to meet demand without reducing oversight or changing eligibility standards.

We support efforts that strengthen the State's agricultural financing programs and help farmers and ranchers invest in land preparation, equipment, infrastructure, diversification, and long-term productivity. Reliable access to capital is essential not only to sustain existing operations but also to grow Hawai'i's agricultural sector, support new and

beginning farmers, and advance broader goals such as increasing local food production and strengthening food system resilience.

SB 2309 represents an important step toward ensuring that State agricultural loan programs can continue to meet demand and support the viability of agriculture across Hawai‘i.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



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February 2, 2026

Aloha e Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and Members of the Agriculture and Environment Committee,

**Re: Testimony in Support of SB2309**

On behalf of Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i, we write in support of SB2309, which allows the Agricultural Loan Division to sell portions of its loan portfolio to fund the Agricultural Loan Revolving Fund, increases the fund's expenditure ceiling, and expands access to agricultural loans to support local food production.

Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the viability and sustainability of Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers through technical assistance, resource coordination, business education, and policy support. **As the administrators of the Hawai'i Agricultural Finance Network, we work closely with farmers and ranchers across the state to help them access capital, and we consistently see demand far outpacing available resources.** We strongly support this measure because it directly addresses a critical and growing gap in agricultural financing in Hawai'i.

The Hawai'i Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Loan Division has already loaned out its available funds, underscoring both the effectiveness of the program and the severity of unmet need. At the same time, federal agricultural lending programs are becoming more limited and less accessible, particularly for small, beginning, and underserved producers. This has increased pressure on state-level financing tools to fill the gap.

By allowing the Agricultural Loan Division to sell portions of its loan portfolio and reinvest the proceeds into the Agricultural Loan Revolving Fund, **this measure responsibly increases lending capacity without weakening the program.** Increasing the fund's expenditure ceiling is essential to expanding access to capital, supporting local food production, and strengthening farm viability statewide.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amanda Shaw".

Dr. Amanda Shaw, PhD, Statewide Food Systems Coordinator  
Email: [amanda@agstewardshiphawaii.org](mailto:amanda@agstewardshiphawaii.org), Tel: 808 429 5310



Email: [communications@ulupono.com](mailto:communications@ulupono.com)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
Wednesday, February 4, 2026 — 3:00 p.m.

**Ulupono Initiative supports SB 2309, Relating to Agricultural Loans.**

Dear Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food, renewable energy and clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

**Ulupono supports SB 2309**, which requires the Agricultural Loan Division to sell portions of its loan portfolio to permitted third parties, with proceeds to be deposited into the agricultural loan revolving fund; and appropriates funds out of the Agricultural Loan Revolving Fund to increase its expenditure ceiling and thereby expand access to agricultural loan financing and support local food production.

Local farmers and ranchers have faced many challenges in recent years, from pandemic-related market disruptions to inflation to rising operational costs. To help agricultural businesses survive and grow, we support expanding access to financing as proposed in this bill.

Following the enactment of Act 69 in 2025, demand has far exceeded available funding. Within just two months, the Agricultural Loan Division approved \$5 million in loans but received an additional \$10 million in applications that could not be funded due to the existing annual ceiling. This backlog has left many qualified farmers unable to access needed capital.

By raising the fund ceiling and unlocking capital that is currently tied up in the existing loan portfolio, this bill will help more farmers scale up operations, adopt new technologies, and compete more effectively with imported products — strengthening Hawai'i's food security and advancing our goals for a more self-sufficient agricultural economy.

Additionally, we request the committee's consideration to replace the "requires" language in this bill with the "authorizes" language from HB 2216. This would provide the department greater flexibility in implementation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata  
Vice President of Government Affairs

*Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i*

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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, February 4, 2026

3:00 PM

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

**RE: SB2309 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL LOANS.**

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.

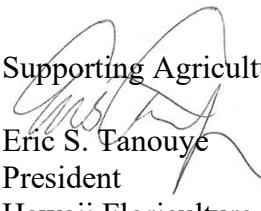
The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 2309** which requires the Agricultural Loan Division to sell portions of its loan portfolio to permitted third parties, with proceeds to be deposited into the agricultural loan revolving fund.

It is important that the Agricultural Loan division has capitol to help with expansion, change and development of products.

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](mailto:eric@greenpointnursery.com).

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,

  
Eric S. Tanouye  
President  
Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association

**SB-2309**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:59:42 AM  
Testimony for AEN on 2/4/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Blazak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

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

I write in strong support of SB2309 and urge the Committee to pass the measure. Mahalo.

**SB-2309**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:35:41 PM  
Testimony for AEN on 2/4/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeremy Burns	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

Aloha AEN Committee,

I am writing in support of 2309 SB relating to agricultural loans. It is very heartening to see the enhanced demand for capital as other rules are adjusted to include more ways to support local agriculture. Financing helps support all of the products and distribution pathways that are both powered-by and help pull-through the efforts of production farmers, who themselves often must wear many hats in this day and age. Expanding the availability of financing will help relieve one important - but just one of many - key constraints that these organizations and individuals are regularly faced with. This represents clear State support of agriculture in a way that also pays it forward, for those who can generate successful ag businesses and test innovative new models. Thank you for your consideration. Aloha, Jeremy Burns