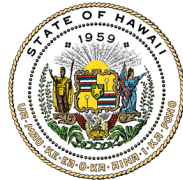


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



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

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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

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

SENATE BILL NO. 2319
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2319 that appropriates funds for the grant writer position within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and makes the position permanent. The Department strongly supports the bill and offers comments.

Federal grants are a key resource for support of Hawaii agriculture and fills agricultural need gaps without having to rely solely on state funding or loan borrowings which need to be repaid. Federal grants have been used to purchase processing equipment which has allowed increased agricultural production and resulted in new value-added products or refrigeration units that increase self-life of agricultural products and maintain cold chains.

The grant writer position was converted to a permanent position by Act 250, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, however for the 2026-2027 fiscal year, general funds were not provided and adequate funding for the position remains uncertain. This position has brought in \$8.89 million in federal grants this year even though many grant opportunities were being lost. The position is also available to work with divisions within the department in applying for grants that provide direct program support. The position is a good investment for the state and should be properly funded through the use of general funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 4, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 2319
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY

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 2319, which appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) grant writer position within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and converts the position from temporary to permanent.

As direct federal appropriations for agriculture continue to decline, state agencies and agricultural stakeholders have become increasingly reliant on competitive federal and private grant programs. Successfully accessing these funds requires specialized expertise, long-term continuity, and the ability to manage complex application and compliance requirements.

We supported similar legislation last year to establish grant specialist capacity within DAB. SB 2319 builds on that effort by recognizing that grant development and management are ongoing functions that require permanent staffing, rather than temporary or ad hoc contracting. Maintaining a permanent grant writer position improves institutional knowledge, continuity, and long-term competitiveness for federal funding.

Improved grant capacity at DAB benefits farmers and ranchers statewide by increasing the State's ability to secure resources that support agricultural production, biosecurity, food security initiatives, and related infrastructure. These grants often help expand capacity, create new business opportunities, and support workforce development within the agricultural sector.

SB 2319 represents a practical and cost-effective investment that strengthens DAB's ability to leverage external funding and better serve Hawai'i's agricultural community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

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

Ulupono Initiative strongly supports SB 2319, Relating to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

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 strongly supports SB 2319, which appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) grant writer position within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) and converts the position from temporary to permanent.

Ulupono supports the State's efforts to actively pursue grant opportunities that help local agriculturalists. Many federal programs are dedicated to aiding departments or agencies across the states that can apply for funding to support local initiatives. General funding the existing DAB grant writer position at \$100,000 is extremely timely, not only to secure new funding for local farmers and ranchers, but also to preserve existing grant funding amid current uncertainties at the federal level.

In 2025, the DAB grant writer secured nearly \$9 million in federal grants—a massive return on the State's investment. In addition to managing \$1.5 million in recurring grants, DAB has identified more than \$54 million in new federal opportunities to support diverse agricultural initiatives, including innovative solutions, water infrastructure improvements, and expanding local processing capacity and market access. DAB is well positioned to secure significant federal resources, but only if equipped with sufficient staff capacity to pursue these opportunities, as many of these grants require complex applications with detailed project budgets, measurable outcomes, and coordination across agencies and stakeholders. Without this capacity, Hawai'i risks leaving millions in federal dollars on the table that could otherwise support critical investments in agricultural infrastructure, food security, and more.

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i

To further illustrate the substantial return on investment from agricultural grant writing, we offer an example from the private nonprofit sector: Over the past 11 years, UluPono invested \$1.4 million in grant writers through organizations such as The Kohala Center, the O'ahu Agriculture and Conservation Association, and the Hawai'i Farm Bureau. These efforts secured approximately \$140 million for local agriculture—a 100x return on investment. This included unprecedented funding from USDA programs such as \$40 million from the Climate-Smart Commodities program, \$30 million from the Regional Food Business Centers program, and \$3.2 million from the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure program.

General funding DAB's grant writer will similarly prove well worth the investment and result in millions of dollars in federal funding to further support the State's agricultural efforts.

We appreciate this committee's effort to hear important measures that look to establish long-term support for our local farmers and ranchers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Vice President of Government Affairs

Attachment

Funding the existing Hawai'i Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) grant writer is a valuable investment that can yield a high return and long-term benefits for the state. This role is essential not only for pursuing new funding but also for maintaining existing federal grants amidst uncertainties in the funding landscape. Strengthening this capacity immediately is critical for the department's efforts.

General fund the existing DAB grant position at \$100,000.

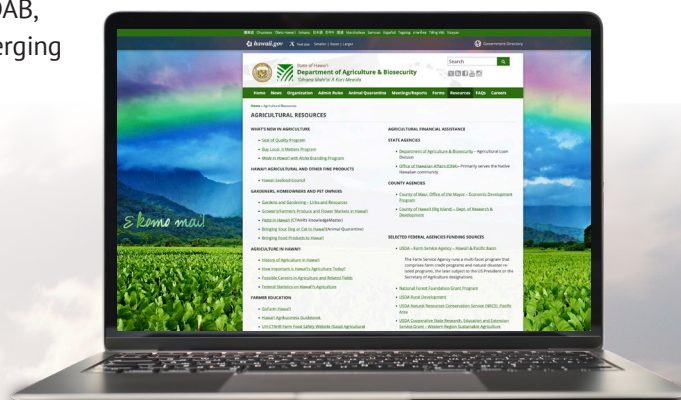
- In 2025, the DAB grant writer collaborated across multiple state agencies and key agricultural stakeholders to apply for more than \$17 million in federal grants, which resulted in nearly \$8.9 million in federal funding awards for Hawai'i's agriculture industry. In addition to managing nearly \$1.5 million in recurring grants, DAB has identified more than \$54 million in new federal opportunities to support diverse agricultural initiatives, including innovative solutions, water infrastructure improvements, and expanding local processing capacity and market access.

Skilled grant writers will help the State to:

- Access federal funds by preparing competitive and compelling grant proposals that align with local farmer needs
- Identify and pursue grants that supplement and leverage existing State resources, maximizing the impact of DAB's programs

Federal grants will provide:

- Additional means to support important projects and services without solely relying on State funds, especially in times of natural disasters and economic hardship
 - A diversified source of long-term funding for DAB, offering stability and flexibility to address emerging challenges or capitalize on new opportunities
- 
- A screenshot of the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship website. The header includes the state seal and navigation links like Home, About Us, Contact Us, etc. The main banner features a green field under a blue sky with the text "Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship". Below the banner are several icons representing different agricultural sectors: Farm, Food, Fiber, Forestry, Fisheries, and Wildlife.



STRENGTHENING DAB'S ABILITY TO ACCESS FEDERAL FUNDING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

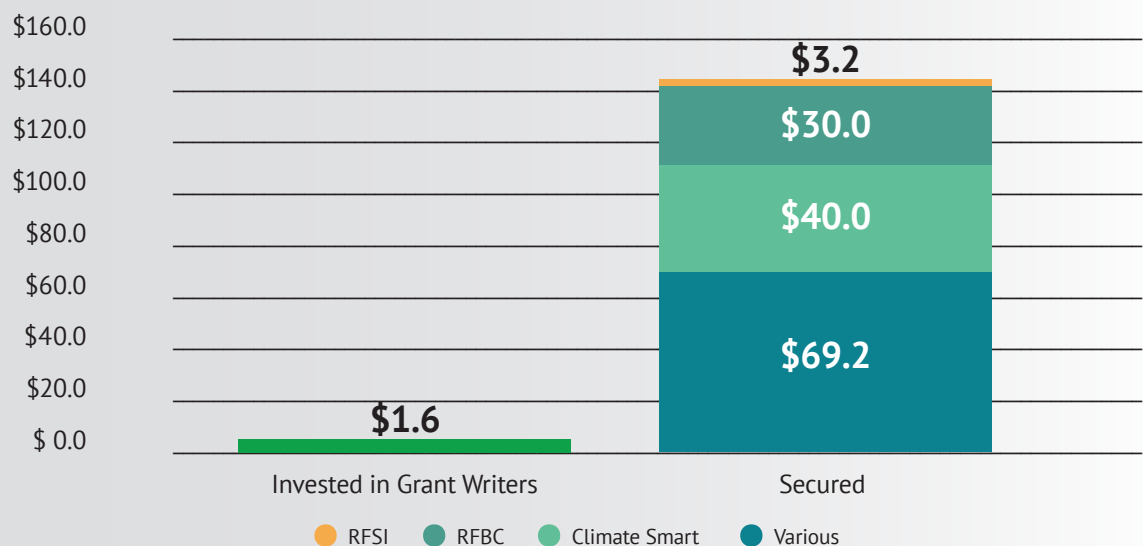


Other Benefits for the State

By having grant writers on DAB's staff, the State will benefit from:

- Grant writing is a specialized skill, and having dedicated grant writers allows other DAB staff to focus on their core responsibilities leading to better use of resources and expertise.
- Aligned grant-seeking efforts with the DAB's strategic goals and priorities ensures that all federal funding opportunities will support the agency's long-term objectives.
- Stronger partnership with Hawai'i's congressional delegation to better communicate the agricultural industry's needs.

Funding Invested vs. Secured (\$s in Millions)



Return on Investment

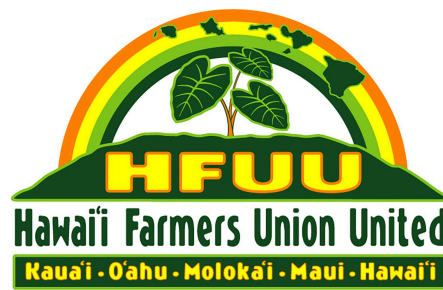
Grant writers provide a significant return on investment.

Investing in grant-writing capacity not only pays for itself but also brings in funds several times the initial investment.

- Ulupono Initiative invested \$1.6 million in grant writers over the past 11 years through organizations such as The Kohala Center, O'ahu Agriculture & Conservation Association, and Hawai'i Farm Bureau.
- Secured ~\$140 million for local agriculture (100x return on investment).
- This included unprecedented funding from the USDA.
 - \$3.2 million from the newly created USDA Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) program.
 - \$40 million from the Climate-Smart Commodities program to help farmers fund climate-smart farming practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The program is currently paused and being renamed. Future funding availability is anticipated.
 - \$30 million from the Regional Food Business Centers (RFBC) program to establish regional centers, which provide farmers with grants and connect them with federal programs. The program has been removed by the current federal administration despite being awarded to Hawai'i.

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Maui

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Kilia Avelino-Purdy
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Negus Manna
Lāna'i

India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

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Wai'anae, O'ahu

Rachel LaDrig
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminka
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 SB2319.**

SB2319 is crucial for enhancing the capacity of Hawaii's Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to secure necessary funding through grants. By appropriating funds for a full-time grant writer position and converting this role from temporary to permanent, the bill ensures that the department can consistently pursue and manage grant opportunities.

Investing in this position demonstrates a commitment to the long-term resilience and prosperity of Hawaii agriculture. This is essential for advancing biosecurity measures, supporting local farmers, and promoting agricultural sustainability. The stability of a permanent position allows for the development of long-term strategies and partnerships, increasing the department's effectiveness in safeguarding Hawaii's unique ecosystems and agricultural interests.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



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

SB2319
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY.

Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 3:00 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

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

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports SB2319** which appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) grant writer position within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and converts the position from temporary to permanent.

Grant writing is often time-consuming and requires thorough knowledge of the process to be successful. While grant funds are available, this difficulty can be a deterrent to farmers and ranchers from applying for such grants. Grant specialists in the Department of Agriculture help our local farmers and ranchers gain access to federal funding that may be available to help them increase capacity and help the state reach its goal of increasing local food production and reducing our reliance on imports. The current grant writer has been instrumental in seeking out potential funding for agricultural industries, gathering data from producers, and has already secured funding for the Department. This is a position that will provide a large return on investment for the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

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





Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

SUPPORT

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 |
Honolulu, HI 96813
P: 808-533-1292 | e:
info@hawaiiifood.com

Executive Officers

Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp., *Chair*
Jayson Watts, Mahi Pono, *Vice Chair*
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Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *President and Executive Director*
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Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
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Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Advisor*
Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Agriculture and Environment
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 4, 2026

TIME: 3pm

RE: SB2319 Relating to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity
Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure to appropriate funds for the existing temporary grant writer position within the department of agriculture and biosecurity and to make the position permanent. Grant writers serve a vital role in securing funds for Hawaii's agricultural sector. As we've seen with the recent awards, there can be a tremendous return on investment when the State ensures there is a dedicated individual in this role.

We encourage the Committee to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



PO Box 4, Kunia, Hawaii, 96759 || 808-622-9026 || www.agstewardshiphawaii.org

February 2, 2026

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

Re: Testimony in Support of SB2319

On behalf of Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i, we strongly support SB2319, which appropriates funds to create a permanent, full-time grant writer position within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB).

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. We work closely with farmers and ranchers across the state to access capital through **our Farmer Funding Helpdesk** and are administrators of **the Hawai'i Agricultural Finance Network**.

This grant writer position is already proving essential: the current grant writer was instrumental in securing Hawai'i's largest federal grant to date—~\$8 million from the USDA—which will provide unprecedented support to farmers statewide. Converting this position from temporary to permanent will ensure that DAB can continue to pursue and manage critical funding opportunities efficiently, maintain institutional knowledge, and proactively respond to federal, state, and private grant opportunities.

A permanent grant writer strengthens the Department's capacity to support farmers, expand access to resources, and advance local food production. In a time when federal programs are increasingly limited, this position is key to sustaining and growing Hawai'i agriculture.

We respectfully urge your support for SB2319 to ensure DAB has the staffing capacity to secure vital funding for our farmers and the state's food system.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

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



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: SB2319 RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY.

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 2319** which appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) grant writer position within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and converts the position from temporary to permanent.

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 mid-sized 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.

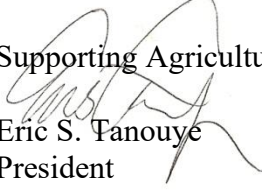
A grant specialist positions within the Department of Agriculture will help the Agriculture industry to access more opportunities and funding. A skilled and trained grant writer assisting farmers and ranchers will allow those who are hesitant, to try and apply for helpful and often needed programs.

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



EAST OAHU COUNTY FARM BUREAU
910 CALIFORNIA AVE., WAHIAWA, HI 96786

February 3, 2026

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair, and Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards III, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
State Capitol, 415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

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

The East O'ahu County Farm Bureau, which represents approximately 420 farmers and supporters of agriculture from Waimanalo to Kahuku, **strongly supports SB 2319**, "Relating to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity," which would provide funding for a permanent grant writer position within HDAB.

Federal and private grant funds are often available to assist farmers and ranchers with production-related research, small equipment purchases, technological upgrades, environmental improvements, value-added product development, and many other activities that support improved productivity and profitability while reducing environmental impact. Most farms and many ranches in Hawai'i are relatively small; they cannot always fund these activities internally, and would have trouble identifying grant sources and completing grant applications. A full-time grant writer within HDAB will help Hawai'i's agricultural community compete for these valuable resources. We therefore hope that your Committee will support Hawai'i's agriculture by passing SB 2319.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter of great importance to Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frederick M. Mencher".

Frederick M. Mencher
for Grant Hamachi, President
East O'ahu County Farm Bureau



February 03, 2026

Subject: **SB2319**, Relating to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity

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

We are writing in support of SB2319 which seeks to fund and create a permanent grant writer position within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

Food+ works with students and community members to build civic engagement and food systems policy literacy across Hawai'i. Through our work in community-based agriculture and food systems advocacy, we strongly believe that having a permanent grant writer position is not only practical but essential within the current agricultural climate in Hawai'i. Federal and private grants are a critical source of funding in agricultural spaces especially around the themes of food security, biosecurity, and climate resiliency across pae 'āina. It would be against the best interest of the health and wellbeing of those who live on this island to miss funding opportunities geared at helping their communities by having a grant writing position that passes from person to person and potentially missing key deadlines for grants, context of the material of the grants that are being written, and pilina that it takes to have the information needed to write those grants.

Hawai'i faces real and increasing threats related to invasive species, climate impacts, and food insecurity. It is critical that the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity has stable staffing and internal capacity to bring much needed resources into the state. This position directly supports programs that protect our 'āina, strengthen local food systems, and increase long-term resilience for communities across Hawai'i.

Converting this position to a permanent position from temporary will allow the department to build relationships with funding agencies, track multi-year grant opportunities, and manage reporting requirements. This is a smart investment that requires legislative action to ensure meaningful and long term work can continue. I strongly urge the Legislature to pass this measure and include the position in the department's base budget moving forward.

Mahalo,
The Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

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.

SB-2319

Submitted on: 1/30/2026 10:37:46 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,

As a constituent of Senate District 1 in Hilo, I strongly support this measure.

SB-2319

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 9:57:54 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/4/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!

SB-2319

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:56:59 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/4/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randy Cabral	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

SB-2319

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 11:13:05 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/4/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
J Ashman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this important measure to support the department and the farmers and ranchers it assists.

SB-2319

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:53:07 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/4/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John R. Gordines	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We support this bill as a permanent position is more desirable.

John Gordines

SB-2319

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 4:56:17 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/4/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason Moniz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HEARING BEFORE THE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

February 4, 2026

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jason Moniz, and I am a rancher and agricultural supporter from Paauilo, Hawaii Island.

I support SB 2319, which provides funding to make permanent a grant writer position within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

Farmers and ranchers increasingly rely on competitive federal and private grants to support agricultural production, biosecurity, and food systems projects. Having dedicated grant-writing capacity within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity helps ensure that Hawai‘i can effectively compete for these resources.

A permanent grant writer improves continuity, institutional knowledge, and the State’s ability to secure funding that benefits farmers and ranchers statewide. This position helps bring additional resources into Hawai‘i’s agricultural sector without placing new costs on producers.

Please support SB 2319.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2319

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:43:55 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/4/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jimmy Gomes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of this bill.