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Statement of
BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO
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Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Wednesday, February 25, 2026
10:57AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

In consideration of
SB2706 SD1, Relating to Workforce Development

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee:

The Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) appreciates the intent of SB2706 SD1 and offers the following comments.

SB2706 SD1 establishes a five-year agriculture and biosecurity workforce development pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i's Leeward Community College and the Department of Human Resources Development.

We are committed to workforce development and training, but the measure does not clearly define our role. Without clarity on our responsibilities, it is difficult to fully evaluate and determine whether additional resources will be needed. We are ready to work with the Legislature to ensure the approach is clear and aligned with existing efforts.

We are available to answer any questions or provide further information as needed.



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February 25, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2706, SD1
RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
10:57 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, 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 2706, SD1, which establishes a five-year agriculture and biosecurity workforce development pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, in collaboration with the University of Hawaii's Leeward Community College and the Department of Human Resources Development.

Workforce shortages remain one of the most significant challenges facing Hawai'i agriculture and biosecurity. Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers continue to age, and many multigenerational operations face uncertainty due to the lack of a trained next generation prepared to enter agricultural and biosecurity careers. Without intentional workforce development efforts, agricultural lands risk falling out of production, increasing Hawai'i's reliance on imported food, and weakening our biosecurity system.

HFB also notes that both agricultural operations and agricultural agencies face increasing difficulty recruiting qualified candidates due to the specialized education, training, and background experience required for many positions. Farming and ranching jobs today often demand technical skills in equipment operation, pest and disease management, compliance, and safety, while positions within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity require scientific, regulatory, or inspection expertise that can be difficult to fill. These workforce gaps highlight the need for targeted training programs that prepare candidates with the skills necessary to succeed in agriculture and biosecurity careers.

HFB has consistently supported initiatives that strengthen agricultural education, training, and career pathways. Prior workforce efforts have demonstrated the importance of

hands-on learning, internships, and clear pathways into employment. SB 2706, SD1 builds on these principles by emphasizing practical training, collaboration with educational institutions, and alignment with workforce needs within agriculture and biosecurity.

HFB also supports the pilot structure of this program. A defined timeframe allows the State to evaluate outcomes, identify best practices, and make informed decisions about long-term workforce investments. Continued engagement with farmers, ranchers, and industry stakeholders will be essential to ensure that training programs remain relevant and responsive to on-the-ground needs.

Developing a skilled agricultural and biosecurity workforce is critical to growing agriculture in Hawai'i and achieving statewide goals such as doubling local food production, strengthening farm-to-school programs, diversifying the economy, and protecting natural resources. SB 2706, SD1 represents an important step toward addressing the workforce challenges that must be overcome to reach these objectives.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 10:57AM
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference**

RE: SB2706 SD1 Relating to Workforce Development

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports Senate Bill 2706 SD1 (SB2706 SD1), which establishes a five-year Agriculture and Biosecurity Workforce Development Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i's Leeward Community College and the Department of Human Resources Development.

SB2706 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillars for 21st Century Agriculture and Economic Action. These pillars prioritize workforce development and increased resilience and productivity within Hawaii's food system. This bill supports the development of a skilled workforce that can meet the states need to food self-sufficiency and improved biosecurity.

The creation of a five-year pilot program will provide sufficient time for the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to fully develop this program and demonstrate the success of this investment. With workforce shortages remaining as a significant headwind to the agriculture industry, measurable outcomes will be key to the demonstrating the success of this program. The Chamber recommends that certain performance metrics be defined in the language of this legislation to more clearly illustrate the desired outcomes of this program, such as the number graduates, employment rate after graduation, increased compensation earned through additional training and credential attainment, and more.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass Senate Bill 2706 SD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



February 24, 2026

To: Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki, and the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Subject: **SB2706 SD1**, Relating to Workforce Development

Aloha,

I am writing to support SB2706 SD1. This measure would establish a five-year agriculture and biosecurity workforce development pilot program in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Leeward Community College within the University of Hawai'i, and the Department of Human Resources Development. A report to the Legislature would also be required.

Hawai'i has the potential to become self-sufficient in food production and we know this because for centuries indigenous peoples of this land were familiar with how to use natural resources strategically and efficiently to feed its people. More farmers means more people equipped with tools to take the power back in being reliant on our own resources instead of needing to import foods from foreign places, and we know how important this is from seeing the effect an epidemic such as COVID-19 in 2020 had across our islands.

I urge the committee to pass SB2706 SD1. Investing in workforce development for the younger generation to learn skills within the agriculture sector is investing in our communities' future so we can continue to work towards self-reliance. **Creating pathways for people interested in agriculture can help improve our local economy in Hawai'i** by increasing agricultural production and replacing the need for imported food, thus keeping more money within communities.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure and thank you for your consideration.

Mahalo,
Sydney Haas & 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-2706-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 7:08:24 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/25/2026 10:57:00 AM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!!

SB-2706-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 10:56:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/25/2026 10:57:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2706 SB RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.