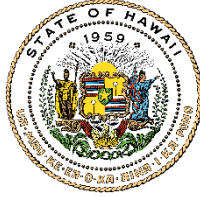


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
FINANCE

Thursday, April 2, 2026
2:00PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2781, SENATE DRAFT 1, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO LEI

Senate Bill 2781, Senate Draft 1, House Draft 1, requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to form a working group that will identify, collect, and report on any existing studies or assessments conducted or data gathered by DAB or the University of Hawai'i regarding flower farms, lei materials, and the capacity of local floriculture to meet public and private demand. It also calls for a study of the state's floriculture industry and the submission of a report to the Legislature. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) submits the following comments.**

Large quantities of lei materials are collected from department-managed forests and lands. Some requests to gather non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as lei-making materials, are regulated through a permitting system within the Division of Forestry and Wildlife. The Department supports the sustainable, responsible, and legal collection of these materials. However, there are currently no standards in place, nor is there a mechanism to identify lei materials in the marketplace, including their origin and methods of production. A chain of custody system would be useful for tracking and labeling sustainable and responsible lei-making products, and the Division suggests exploring various third-party certification programs that are auditable and rigorous to support these practices.

The Department believes there is room to improve the collection of lei materials from Hawai'i's forest areas and aims to strengthen its relationships with lei material collectors to promote and support legal, sustainable, and culturally appropriate harvesting practices. Collecting non-timber forest products is a significant benefit provided by Hawai'i's forests that should be

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

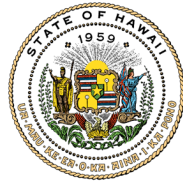
AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

encouraged. The Department also recommends an internal review among divisions to develop best management practices to reduce the risk of spreading invasive species associated with lei material collection. Of particular concern are the spread of Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death, Little Fire ants, and Coqui frogs.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

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 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**THURSDAY APRIL 2, 2026
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2781 SD1, HD1
RELATING TO LEI**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to Senate Bill No. 2781 SD1, HD1 Relating to Lei. This bill establishes benchmarks to ensure that a certain percentage of lei purchased by that executive agency consists entirely of natural objects and plant materials grown, harvested and assembled in the State. Establishes labeling requirements for lei and lei materials. Requires the disclosure of the geographic origin for the plant materials and natural objects that comprise a lei or lei materials. The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity supports this measure.

The Department agrees that each state executive agency shall ensure the lei's purchased for use in celebrations, ceremonies and regular use shall use all natural objects and plant materials such as leaves, ferns, flowers, vines and seeds that are grown, harvested and assembled in the state. The Department suggests that the percentage allowed by benchmarks within the bill be chosen to standards that are reasonably attainable and enforceable by the procurement code by the dates allowed.

DAB will work with the floriculture industry to establish regulation and procedures for establishing labeling with the term "Hawaii Grown" or variations of that term for lei's that are at least ninety percent cultivated, harvested, and have direct material costs within the State. Please note that page four lines seven through ten refer to not using the term "Hawaii Made" under the requirements of section 201-3.5. We suggest that this should not be in the language of HRS 486- since it falls under DBEDT Hawaii revised statutes and requires only fifty-one percent compliance, not ninety percent that was introduced to the bill on page three line twenty. These two statutes are regulated by DAB and DBEDT respectively.

Testimony of Sharon Hurd

April 2, 2016

Page 2

Should the measure be enacted DAB respectfully requests for 1 FTE Measurement Standards Inspector V position SR19 \$65,000 initially to help develop inspection and regulation processes and enforce the labeling of the product.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

SB-2781-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 2:21:34 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
RICHARD COHEN	State Of Hawaii Dept. of Agriculture and Biosecurity Measurement Standards Branch Manager	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

DAB has submitted written testimony, I am here to stand on that testimony and available to answer questions. Thank you,



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April 2, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**TESTIMONY ON SB 2781, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO LEI**

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, 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 2781, SD1, HD1, which requires and establishes benchmarks for each state executive agency to ensure that a certain percentage of lei purchased by that executive agency consists of lei made entirely of natural objects and plant materials grown, harvested, and assembled in the State.

Lei are deeply rooted in Hawai'i's cultural traditions and represent an important agricultural product for many local flower growers and lei makers. Supporting locally grown and assembled lei strengthens our floriculture industry, sustains family farms, and reinforces the cultural and economic value of Hawai'i-grown products.

HFB recognizes that the floriculture and lei industry is a diverse agricultural sector that includes growers, lei makers, wholesalers, and retailers. While increasing the use of locally grown is an important goal, implementation must include reasonable flexibility when locally grown lei or plant materials are unavailable due to seasonality, supply limitations, pest pressures, force majeure events, or other unforeseen agricultural conditions. Such flexibility will help ensure the policy remains workable in practice while continuing to prioritize Hawai'i-grown products.

As noted in prior testimony on similar measures, Hawai'i's current floriculture production does not yet have the capacity to meet statewide demand. Industry estimates indicate that only a limited percentage of flowers and lei materials used in the State are locally

produced, and many businesses rely on imported materials to operate and meet consumer demand.

Establishing procurement benchmarks without fully accounting for:

- production capacity,
- seasonality,
- labor availability, and
- supply chain constraints

may create challenges for both producers and purchasers and could have unintended consequences for the broader lei and floriculture industry.

Additionally, while HFB supports transparency, labeling requirements should be clear, practical, and not overly burdensome, particularly for small businesses. Implementation should consider how origin verification will be conducted consistently and in a workable manner across the industry.

HFB notes that earlier versions of this measure proposed a working group approach, which would have allowed stakeholders to collaboratively evaluate production capacity, market conditions, and appropriate benchmarks before implementation. We continue to believe that a stakeholder-driven process would help ensure that any standards adopted are both meaningful and achievable.

As this measure moves forward, HFB respectfully requests that the Legislature consider:

- aligning any benchmarks with current and projected local production capacity;
- ensuring flexibility to account for seasonal and market variability; and
- engaging stakeholders to develop practical implementation and labeling frameworks.

HFB remains committed to working collaboratively to strengthen Hawai'i's floriculture sector in a way that is culturally respectful, economically viable, and operationally realistic.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.



April 2, 2026

TESTIMONY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUBS
To the House Committee on Finance
In Support of

SB 2781 SD1 HD1 - RELATING TO LEI

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

The Association of Hawaii Civic Clubs submits testimony in **strong support** of SB 2781 Relating to Lei which would affirm the supporting of the cultural integrity of lei and locally made lei.

Lei carry mana‘o, ceremony, aloha. They are more than a simple adornment. For generations, lei have been made from materials gathered, grown, and thoughtfully prepared in Hawai‘i.

SB 2781 SD1 HD1 requires each state executive agency to ensure a percentage of lei purchased by the agency to be made of natural plant materials grown, harvested, and assembled in Hawai‘i, and establishes labeling requirements for lei and lei materials. By creating these benchmarks for state purchasing, the State's own procurement practices can support lei made from natural materials grown, harvested, and assembled in the islands. The labeling can bring much needed clarity to consumers around what is truly “Hawai‘i Made” or “Hawai‘i Grown”. Supporting Hawai‘i lei material producers and the businesses who make lei helps to support our cultural practices and bring positive economic impacts to our home land.

Founded by Prince Kūhiō in 1918, the Hawaiian Civic Club movement is the oldest Native Hawaiian community-based advocacy movement. The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs is a not-for-profit confederation of 60 individual and autonomous Hawaiian Civic Clubs and 3,500 members located across Hawai‘i and across the continental United States.

We appreciate your favorable consideration of this measure.

Testimony in Support of SB2781, HD1
Senate Bill 2781 — Relating to Lei Labels
Finance Committee Hearing — April 1, 2026

Submitted by: Zabrina Zablan-Duvauchelle, Owner & Co-Founder, Haus of Puas
Position: Strong Support

Aloha,

I am writing in strong support of SB2781, HD1 on behalf of Haus of Puas, West O‘ahu's first farm-to-lei stand and lei shop, located in the Ho‘opili neighborhood of Ewa Beach.

Haus of Puas was built on a simple but deeply rooted belief: that Hawai‘i's pua should come from Hawai‘i's farms, and that the hands that grow, gather, and craft lei deserve to be seen, supported, and fairly compensated. Every week, we source farm-direct pua from across the pae ‘āina, and our multi-generational lei consignment fridge exists specifically to uplift local lei makers, many of whom carry ‘ike handed down through their families for generations. We reinvest directly into Hawai‘i's farming community because we believe that is our kuleana as a business.

What we see every day at Haus of Puas is exactly why SB2781 matters. Over 90% of flowers used in lei are imported. Customers often have no way of knowing whether the lei they're purchasing was grown or made here in Hawai‘i. This lack of transparency hurts our local farmers, our lei makers, and ultimately erodes the cultural and economic integrity of one of Hawai‘i's most cherished traditions.

SB2781 creates common-sense labeling standards that give consumers the information they deserve and direct state procurement toward locally grown and crafted lei. This is not just good policy, it is a meaningful act of cultural and economic mālama. It tells Hawai‘i's farmers, growers, and lei makers: what you do matters, and the state will put its resources behind you.

As a small, locally owned business on the west side of O‘ahu, we see firsthand the challenges that local farmers and lei makers face competing against cheaper, imported alternatives. Clear labeling levels the playing field and empowers both consumers and state agencies to make choices that keep dollars, and aloha, circulating within our community.

I strongly urge this committee to pass SB2781. Our lei traditions are worth protecting. Our farmers and lei makers are worth investing in. And our community deserves to know the story behind every lei they wear.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration and your service.

Me ke aloha,
Zabrina Zablan-Duvauchelle
Owner & Co-Founder, Haus of Puas
West O‘ahu's First Lei Stand
Ho‘opili, Ewa Beach, HI | hausofpuas.co



Hawai'i State Senate
Committee on Finance
SB2781 SD1 HD1 – Relating to Lei

RE: Strong support of SB2781 SD1 HD1

April 2, 2026

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

Hawaiian Council writes in **strong support of SB2781 SD1 HD1** to advance consumer education and ensure continued support for Hawai'i's local farmers, cultural practitioners, and small businesses.

This measure supports our local economy by uplifting both consumers and producers. When people visit our islands in search of authentic experiences, one of the most meaningful cultural expressions Hawai'i has to offer is lei—a symbol of aloha that should be accurately represented to both kama'āina and malihini alike.

Over the years, lei has become an economic driver that allows us to circulate money within our communities. However, this can only be sustained with proper benchmarks. The incentives within SB2781 SD1 HD1 ensure that we not only continue to invest in our local economy, but also give consumers the opportunity and transparency needed to do so.

When lei are mislabeled to represent an untrue origin, it harms those who are authentic producers. It deprives consumers of their ability to choose to support local businesses and cultural practitioners, creating a direct disadvantage for the 291 floriculture and nursery operations, as well as the many lei shops and individual practitioners across Hawai'i. Without proper labeling guidelines, the public becomes susceptible to misleading information, and our local economy suffers as a result.

This bill presents a significant effort to uplift and honor those who cultivate the Hawaiian cultural practice of lei making. Where a lei comes from is just as important as the meaning it carries when given. There is mana in every hand that touches it, significance in the places where its materials are harvested, and intention behind each person who chooses to sell or gift it. For this reason, when people receive or wear lei, their true origins should be known.

Lei making is a deeply rooted cultural practice, and those who create lei are essential to its perpetuation. From the humble lei lā'ī to the intricate Ni'ihau shell lei, practitioners have long used the materials around them to create a wide range of lei with varying meanings and complexities. These communities deserve recognition and protection from the harm caused by inaccurate labeling.

HAWAIIANS ADVANCING HAWAI'I

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In addition to its economic benefits, this measure is essential to the preservation of our culture. Lei strengthens the relationship between kanaka and 'āina, reinforcing 'ike passed down through generations. It is present at celebrations, public events, graduations, birthdays, and woven into the fabric of everyday life in Hawai'i.

Hawai'i is a place rooted in its culture and a people. The unique circumstances of our islands call for policies like SB2781 SD1 HD1 that prioritize these elements. Through this measure, we uplift the beauty of our islands and the people who create and sustain these cultural expressions. Without intentional support, we risk losing the authenticity and characteristics that make Hawai'i so unique.

For residents and visitors alike, the ability to choose a locally grown or locally made lei is a simple yet meaningful way to support Hawai'i's economy, appreciate Native Hawaiian culture, and promote sustainable purchasing habits. This bill also helps ensure that local supply can better meet local demand over time.

Some concerns about this measure suggest potential restrictions on the sale or purchase of lei. However, this bill poses no such threat; instead, it ensures that consumers can make informed decisions and without intentional support, local supply will continue to decline, increasing Hawai'i's dependence on imported products. SB2781 SD1 HD1 protects consumers, supports local producers, and creates a distinction between "Grown in Hawai'i" and "Made in Hawai'i." These two categories are vital and understands that a lei maker who uses imported materials but creates the lei in Hawai'i is still contributing to the local economy and perpetuating culture. By supporting both classifications, the bill provides flexibility while prioritizing local value creation.

For these reasons, Hawaiian Council respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS SB2781 SD1 HD1**. Mahalo for your continued commitment to supporting Native Hawaiian culture, agriculture, and local lei makers.

Mālama pono,

Kūhiō Lewis
CEO, Hawaiian Council

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Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Finance 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 SB2781.**

SB2781 embodies a comprehensive approach towards promoting sustainability and supporting local agriculture in Hawaii. By requiring state executive agencies to prioritize lei made entirely of natural objects and plant materials sourced from within the state, the bill encourages the use of locally grown and harvested resources. This not only bolsters Hawaii's economy by providing increased opportunities for local farmers and artisans but also helps in reducing the carbon footprint associated with importing plant materials from distant locations. The establishment of clear benchmarks ensures accountability and drives progress toward a more sustainable and self-sufficient Hawaii.

Moreover, the labeling and disclosure requirements introduced in the bill enhance transparency and consumer awareness. By mandating the declaration of the geographic origin of the plant materials used in lei production, consumers are empowered to make informed choices, further supporting local producers. This focus on transparency aligns with global movements toward ethical consumption and responsible sourcing, which resonate with the values of both residents and visitors to Hawaii. SB2781 not only preserves the cultural heritage of lei but also ensures that their production respects and supports the land and people of Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



Watanabe *floral*

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Rep. Daisy Hartsfield	Rep. Dee Morikawa
Rep. Ikaika Hussey	Rep. Amy A. Perruso
Rep. Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy	Rep. Shirley Ann Templo
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa	Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita
Rep. Matthias Kusch	Rep. David Alcos III
Rep. Mike Lee	Rep. Joe Gedeon
Rep. Tyson K. Miyake	Rep. Julie Reyes Oda

NOTICE OF HEARING

DATE: Thursday, April 2, 2026
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
PLACE: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 308
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

RE: SB2781 RELATING TO LEIS

My name is **Monty Pereira**, and I am the **General Manager and Head of Sales and Marketing at Watanabe Floral, Inc.** I respectfully submit this testimony in **opposition to SB2781 as currently stated.**

We appreciate and whole heartedly support the intent of this bill to support Hawai'i agriculture and floriculture by encouraging state agencies to purchase Hawai'i-grown and Hawai'i-made lei. We also support efforts to revitalize local lei flower production and honor the cultural significance of Lei. However, we have concerns regarding the **current capacity of local growers to meet demand within the timelines proposed.** Without sufficient supply, these requirements may unintentionally reduce overall lei usage rather than strengthen the industry.

As both a wholesaler and retailer, we understand the operational realities faced by lei producers and lei stands. Imported materials are currently used to **supplement—not supplant—local production**, allowing businesses to meet demand while local growers continue to rebuild

capacity. Given ongoing labor and scaling challenges, we respectfully request a **more flexible and realistic implementation timeline.**

We also oppose the bill's **labeling requirements.** Many lei made in Hawai'i incorporate a combination of locally grown and imported materials. One example is the currently situation with tuberose production, where limited availability of flowers is stretched by incorporating carnations, allowing the lei providers to nearly double their capacity to meet demand.

We fear that mandating detailed labeling would impose additional labor, cost, and administrative burden on an industry already facing severe staffing shortages. These same labor constraints are a primary reason local floriculture production has declined. Requiring additional labeling would divert limited resources away from production and further strain struggling businesses.

We believe the goals of **SB2781** can be achieved through collaborative, non-punitive approaches that support local production **without harming the import partnerships many lei businesses rely on to survive.** We respectfully urge the committee to reconsider this measure or amend it to reflect the current realities of Hawai'i's floral industry as we work together to revive local floriculture.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,

Monty Pereira

General Manager & Head of Sales and Marketing
Watanabe Floral, Inc.



Testimony in Opposition to SB2781

Paradise Leis respectfully submits this testimony in opposition to SB2781 as currently written.

As local and native Hawaiian grown boys raised with the deep importance of Aloha and Malama Aina, we understand and grasp and support the goal of this bill to support Hawai'i-grown agriculture and strengthen local floriculture, but we are deeply concerned that the current provisions, particularly the limitations of the necessary supplemental importing of imported flowers and mandatory labeling requirements, would have unintended consequences that negatively impact the lei industry and it's important viability as a whole on the real scale it is and the many it affects.

Lei giving and receiving in Hawai'i is a culturally significant tradition that serves both residents and visitors across countless special occasions, including graduations, luaus, hotel greetings, religious communities, weddings, and many community ceremonies. The demand for lei throughout the state is substantial and consistent and greatly exceeds what the local agricultural supply chain could realistically ever produce. It's like saying we can only use materials produced locally for all other things. And we would not desire for the ability of the blessing of lei for all these occasions to result in drastic limitations. As a result, imported flowers are not used to replace local products, but rather to supplement them in order to meet real-world demand.

Our company also imports orchids from Thailand to help fulfill this demand, working alongside other wholesalers and lei businesses that rely on both local and imported materials to sustain operations. If imports are restricted or burdened with mandatory labeling requirements, the immediate effect will not be an increase in local production capacity, but rather a reduction in overall availability of lei for so many. This would directly impact small businesses, distributors, lei makers, and the many events and consumers who love and depend on these products, and particularly what they express and represent.

We share the goal of supporting local growers and strengthening Hawai'i's floriculture industry. However, the current local supply remains and will always be insufficient to meet peak and ongoing demand, particularly during high-volume seasons such as graduations. Imported materials play a critical role in bridging this gap and ensuring continuity of supply. Limiting or discouraging their use through additional regulatory burdens risks disrupting the balance that currently allows the industry to function, and so many to be able to receive lei.

We also have serious concerns regarding the proposed labeling requirements. Many lei are created using a combination of locally grown and imported materials. Mandating

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detailed geographic origin labeling would impose additional administrative workload, labor costs, and compliance complexity on an industry already facing staffing shortages and many other challenges. These added burdens would divert time and resources away from production, further straining local small businesses and increasing costs to consumers. And one of our goals is to keep lei as affordable as we possibly can, so as to enable as many people as possible the opportunity to receive flower lei. But increased added compliance and labeling adds a lot of added time and costs, which we would have to pass on to the customers, which would be unfortunate for all. This might be okay for a few small boutique shops that sell a few high-priced lei per day, who can afford the added requirements, but for most lei shops-the ones our communities rely on for graduations, birthdays, and “just because”-this is a major hurdle. Plus, we all might lose many customers to non-traditional non-floral alternatives.

Additionally, given the variability in flower availability due to seasonal conditions, weather patterns, labor constraints, and market fluctuations, flexibility is essential. There are times when local supply is limited, and imported materials are necessary to fulfill last-minute orders and maintain consistent service and needs. A rigid labeling requirement does not reflect the dynamic nature of agricultural supply chains or the operational realities faced by lei businesses in Hawai‘i.

Rather than imposing strict mandates, we encourage a more flexible and collaborative approach that supports both local producers and the businesses that depend on them. Consideration should be given to phased implementation timelines, exemptions for local small businesses, and policies that allow imported materials to continue supplementing local production as is necessary. This balanced approach would better support the long-term growth of Hawai‘i’s floriculture industry without undermining existing businesses or reducing overall lei availability.

Importantly, the lei industry is not solely dependent on local production or imports alone—it is the combination of both that allows us to meet cultural, commercial, and community needs. Any policy that disrupts this balance risks diminishing access to lei across Hawai‘i as well as shared with loved ones on the mainland, affecting not only businesses but also the traditions and experiences that lei represent.

For these reasons, Paradise Leis respectfully urges lawmakers to reconsider SB2781 in its current form and to pursue amendments that reflect the operational realities of Hawai‘i’s greater lei industry while continuing to support both local agriculture and the broader ecosystem that sustains it.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Derek Kaho’ohanohano Kondo
Brent Keoki Young
Paradise Leis

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April 2, 2026

House Committee on Finance
Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Thursday, April 2, 2026, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308 and via video conference



RE: SB 2781 SD1 HD1 Relating to Lei

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kiran Polk, and I am the Executive Director & CEO of the Kapolei Chamber of Commerce. The Kapolei Chamber of Commerce is an advocate for businesses in the Kapolei region including Waipahu, Kapolei, 'Ewa Beach, Nānakūli, Wai'anae, and Mākaha. We work on behalf of our members and the broader business community to improve the regional and State economic climate and to help West O'ahu businesses thrive.

The Kapolei Chamber of Commerce **supports SB 2781 SD1 HD1** because it is a measure that strengthens Hawai'i's local economy by reinforcing demand for locally grown, harvested, and assembled lei, and by extension, the small farms, florists, cultural practitioners, and businesses that rely on this supply chain. The measure requires and establishes benchmarks for each state executive agency to ensure that a certain percentage of lei purchased by that executive agency consists of lei made entirely of natural objects and plant materials grown, harvested, and assembled in the State. It also establishes labeling requirements for lei and lei materials. And requires the disclosure of the geographic origin for the plant materials and natural objects that comprise a lei or lei materials.

One of our small business members, Haus of Puas, illustrates why this bill matters. Haus of Puas is the first floral and lei shop serving West O'ahu in recent years, and their business model is intentionally rooted in sourcing locally and reinvesting back into Hawai'i's agricultural community. Through their operations, Haus of Puas currently **supports 15 local lei makers and small farms, many of whom are based in Wai'anae, Nānakūli, Kapolei, and 'Ewa. These are small, community-based operations that depend on consistent local demand to remain viable.**

By choosing to source locally, Haus of Puas helps sustain an interconnected ecosystem where small farms, lei makers, and retail businesses support one another. SB 2781 reinforces this model by promoting transparency and encouraging the use of locally made lei, ensuring that demand continues to flow to Hawai'i growers and producers rather than imported products.

From a business perspective, this measure supports more than cultural preservation, it supports economic sustainability. Clear standards and procurement practices help small farms plan, grow, and invest with confidence, while allowing small businesses to compete fairly in the marketplace. **For regions like West O'ahu, where local businesses are closely tied to agricultural producers and cultural practitioners, this kind of policy support is especially meaningful.**

SB 2781 aligns with the Kapolei Chamber's commitment to strengthening small businesses, supporting local agriculture, and keeping economic activity rooted in Hawai'i culture and communities. For these reasons, the Kapolei Chamber of Commerce **supports SB 2781** and respectfully urges the Committee to pass this measure.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

Kiran Polk
Executive Director & CEO

SB-2781-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 12:21:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Ware	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support all local agriculture and products from local grown and harvested plants.

Mahalo Diane Ware Volcano 96785

SB-2781-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 1:41:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of. This is in alignment with the new mac nut and coffee laws. Thank you for passing those bills and for support this one.

SB-2781-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 7:02:25 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support including OHA testimony dated 3/20/26

2781 SB RELATING TO LEI.

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in SUPPORT of SB2781 SD1, which requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to convene a working group to gather data and conduct a comprehensive study of Hawai‘i’s floriculture industry, including the production and sourcing of lei materials. OHA supports this measure because lei are not merely commercial products; they are living expressions of cultural relationship that connect land, people, and ceremony across generations. The lei is a cultural practice deeply rooted in Native Hawaiian tradition, used in ceremony, celebration and daily expressions of aloha. The growing use of imported materials in lei-making, while marketing these products with Hawaiian language and imagery, risks misleading consumers and eroding the cultural integrity of this practice. Supporting locally grown and assembled lei helps safeguard authenticity, protects cultural practitioners, and reinforces the intergenerational transmission of ‘ike associated with gathering, cultivating, and preparing lei materials.¹ Hawai‘i imports a significant percentage of its agricultural products for both food and lei-making, making local production capacity, supply chains, and land allocation 1 See Mary Kawena Pukui, Samuel H. Elbert & Esther T. Mookini, Place Names of Hawai‘i xv–xvii (rev. ed. 1974) (describing cultural significance of plant gathering and lei traditions in Hawaiian practice); Nona Beamer, Nā Lei Makamae: The Treasured Lei 1–5 (1996). matters of cultural, economic, and food system resilience.² Supporting local lei production not only protects cultural practices, but also sustains small farms, reduces dependence on imports, and reinforces rural economic stability. Requiring data collection regarding local production capacity lays the groundwork for informed policy decisions to promote fair labeling, protect intellectual and cultural integrity. OHA supports this approach as a data-driven step toward strengthening Hawai‘i’s floriculture sector, advancing food security goals, while honoring the cultural significance of lei as a practice of relationship to ‘ā ina and community.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

My name is Oriana Leao and I strongly support SB2781, SD1, HD1, which 1) requires and establishes benchmarks for each State executive agency to ensure that a certain percentage of lei purchased by that executive agency consists of lei made entirely of natural objects and plant materials grown, harvested, and assembled in the State, 2) establishes labeling requirements for lei and lei materials and 3) requires the disclosure of the geographic origin for the plant materials and natural objects that comprise a lei or lei materials.

Lei are one of the few gifts deemed acceptable by the Hawaii State Ethics Commission that does not require reporting for elected and appointed officials in the State and approximately 90% of the lei sold in Hawai'i are made with imported flowers. Hawai'i's floriculture industry is valued at about \$47.1 million, with cut flowers accounting for \$5.6 million. This bill will support the local economy, growers, farmers, cultural practitioners, and lei making communities. The labeling requirements will allow the public to identify where lei materials are sourced and allow consumers to make conscious choices in the purchase of lei and lei materials.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Me ka ha'aha'a (with humility),
Oriana Leao

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT

SB 2781, SD1, HD1

RELATING TO LEI

House Committee on Finance

Thursday, April 2, 2026 | 2:00 p.m. | Conference Room 308, State Capitol

Submitted by: Benton K. Pang, Ph.D.

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance:

I offer this testimony in strong support of SB 2781, SD1, HD1, and urge the Committee to pass this measure with the amendments that align it with the intent and strength of the House companion bill, HB 2194, HD2.

My Background

I spent 26 years as a federal biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, working on invasive species management, private lands conservation, and Pacific island ecosystems. I hold a Ph.D. and M.S. in Botany from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, with academic work focused on Hawaiian ethnobotany—including plant fibers in kapa and forest use during the Kamehameha I era. I serve today as Board President of Ka'ala Farm Inc., a cultural education nonprofit in Wai'anāe, O'ahu. Lei and lei-making materials are inseparable from the cultural education work we do every day.

Why This Bill Matters

Lei is not simply a product. It is a living expression of our relationship to 'āina, to 'ike handed down through generations, and to each other. From Holokū balls to graduations to public ceremonies, lei is woven into everyday life in Hawai'i in ways that few other practices are.

Yet consumers—residents and visitors alike—often have no way to know whether the lei they purchase was grown and made in Hawai'i or imported from overseas. Imported lei and materials are frequently indistinguishable from locally grown ones. This lack of transparency undermines the ability of consumers to support local growers, makers, and cultural practitioners.

SB 2781, SD1, HD1 addresses this directly. It:

- Establishes labeling requirements so consumers know the geographic origin of lei and lei materials
- Requires state executive agencies to meet benchmarks for procuring lei grown, harvested, and assembled in Hawai'i

- Takes a phased approach that allows local supply to grow alongside increasing demand

These provisions are market-based and practical. They do not restrict the sale of imported lei. They give consumers the information they need to make intentional choices.

Demand Drives Supply

Some have raised concerns about supply shortages or price increases. These concerns get the economics backward. Without intentional support for local producers, local supply will continue to decline. When we signal consistent demand—especially through public procurement—we give farmers and lei makers the confidence to expand production and invest in their operations.

Hawai'i has approximately 291 floriculture and nursery operations, alongside countless small lei shops, individual practitioners, and informal gatherers and makers. Many operate on thin margins. Steady, reliable demand from state procurement alone would be meaningful to these businesses.

Support Both “Grown in Hawai'i” and “Made in Hawai'i”

I strongly support the clarification in HB 2194, HD2, which recognizes both “Grown in Hawai'i” and “Made in Hawai'i” as distinct and valid categories. Lei making is both an agricultural and a cultural practice. A lei maker who sources imported materials but assembles the lei here is still contributing to the local economy and to cultural perpetuation. Recognizing both classifications provides flexibility while maintaining a focus on local value creation.

The full lei economy includes:

- Growers and nursery operators producing flowers and foliage
- Gatherers sourcing materials from forests and coastal areas
- Cultural practitioners working with traditional and non-commercial materials
- Small-scale and home-based lei makers not captured in formal industry data

Any approach that only looks at floriculture data will miss most of this picture. We already know enough to act. What is needed now is implementation, not further study.

Cultural Kuleana

At Ka'ala Farm, we teach young people about their connection to the land through hands-on work with native plants, traditional practices, and community stewardship. Lei making is part of that education. When local supply declines and imported lei dominates the market, we lose more than

economic activity—we lose the conditions that make cultural transmission possible.

This bill keeps state dollars circulating locally, supports small businesses and family operations, reinforces Native Hawaiian cultural practices, and empowers consumers to make values-based choices. These outcomes align directly with the State's obligations to Hawai'i's people, culture, and 'āina.

I respectfully urge the Committee to PASS SB 2781, SD1, HD1, with amendments aligning it with HB 2194, HD2.

Mahalo for your service and your commitment to our community.

Me ka 'oia'i'o,

Keali'i Pang, Ph.D.

Kaimukī, O'ahu

SB-2781-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 4:50:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aprilani McIlwraith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB2781, HD1.

I help organize lei-making workshops and community gatherings here on O‘ahu, and I see firsthand how important it is for our lei traditions to stay rooted in local practice, not just become something people buy without understanding.

Lei is not just a product. It is something we grow, gather, and make together. It carries relationships—to ‘āina, to Hawai‘i’s culture, and to each other. When lei becomes overly commercialized without connection to these practices, we lose more than quality—we lose meaning, knowledge, and continuity.

At the same time, many of our current lei makers are kūpuna, and there is real concern within the community about who will continue this work as they retire. This is not due to a lack of interest, but because it is difficult to sustain a livelihood in lei making under current conditions.

We are also seeing increasing demand for lei, alongside a wide range of pricing and quality that can be confusing for buyers. Many already feel that lei is becoming expensive, yet local growers and makers are still not always able to earn enough to make this work sustainable. This gap puts both the tradition and the local supply at serious risk.

Strengthening support for locally grown and made lei helps address this. Prioritizing local sourcing and improving labeling transparency supports small agricultural producers and lei makers, keeps resources circulating in Hawai‘i, and helps build a more stable foundation for future practitioners to step in.

This kind of support is needed now, so that over time the practice can sustain itself and the next generations can realistically carry it forward.

Please support SB2781, HD1.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,
Aprilani McIlwraith
Kama‘āina Community

