

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI A KIA'I MEAOLA
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9560 FAX: (808) 973-9613

TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

FEBRUARY 13, 2026
3:10 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE BILL NO. 3296
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

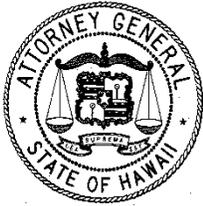
Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 3296. This bill establishes the Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department). Appropriates funds and requires a report to the Legislature. The Department supports this bill.

Agricultural conservation practices for tropical weather conditions, small scale production models and cultural stewardship models unique to Hawaii will assist in making agriculture in the state more resilient and sustainable. Having a statewide coordinated system that provides conservation training, cost-share or implementation assistance and infrastructure development will allow for environmental stewardship, improved soil and water health, and carbon emissions reduction.

The Department would recommend that a longer timeline be provided for program development due to the statewide comprehensive nature of the program and respectfully request that a position be provided to properly oversee implementation of the proposed program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
S.B. NO. 3296, RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

BEFORE THE:
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

DATE: Friday, February 13, 2026 **TIME:** 3:10 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 224

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Travis T. Moon or Christopher J.I. Leong,
Deputy Attorneys General

Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill establishes the Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) to expand access to funding and technical assistance for conservation agriculture training, implementation, and infrastructure development. The bill authorizes the Department to contract with or award grants to nonprofit organizations and to provide funding support to farmers, ranchers, land managers, and conservation partners implementing conservation practices.

The bill provides that the Department may award grants to "a nonprofit, or a consortium of nonprofits with experience in administering statewide food system funds, agriculture and conservation cost-share programs, and delivering conservation agriculture training and technical assistance" (page 4, lines 13-18). However, the bill does not include standards for those grants. Article VII, section 4, of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii requires that "[n]o grant of public money or property shall be made except pursuant to standards provided by law." Accordingly, we recommend that the bill be amended to include sufficient grant standards in the bill. We have attached draft standards to this testimony as a sample for consideration. These standards could be

inserted beginning on page 5, line 3, as a new section 141- (e). Additionally, we stand ready to work with you to develop more specific standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.

POSSIBLE STANDARDS FOR THE GRANTS IN THIS BILL

(e) The department of agriculture and biosecurity may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to establish procedures, eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria, reporting requirements, and other administrative provisions necessary to implement and administer grants awarded under this section. Applications for grants shall be submitted to the department of agriculture and biosecurity in a form and manner prescribed by the department of agriculture and biosecurity. At a minimum, the applicant shall:

- (1) Be licensed or accredited, in accordance with federal, state, or county statutes, regulations rules, or ordinances, to conduct the activities or provide the services for which a grant is awarded;
- (2) Provide a detailed plan outlining the scope, objectives, and projected impact of the proposed project and a clear breakdown of how grant funds will be used;
- (3) Agree to use state funds exclusively for the purposes of this program;
- (4) Demonstrate the capability and capacity to properly carry out the proposed project and use the grant for the purposes of the program;
- (5) Comply with all applicable federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law;
- (6) Agree not to use state funds for purposes of entertainment or perquisites;
- (7) Comply with any additional requirements as the department of agriculture and biosecurity may prescribe;
- (8) Comply with all applicable federal, state, and county statutes, regulations, rules, and ordinances;

Testimony of the Department of the Attorney General

Thirty-Third Legislature, 2026

Page 4 of 4

- (9) Agree to indemnify and save harmless the State of Hawaii and its officers, agents, and employees from and against any and all claims arising out of or resulting from activities carried out or projects undertaken with funds provided hereunder and procure sufficient insurance to provide this indemnification if requested to do so by the department of agriculture and biosecurity; and
- (10) Agree to make available to the department of agriculture and biosecurity all records the applicant may have relating to the grant, to allow state agencies to monitor the applicant's compliance with this section."

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION
KE KE'ENA HO'OMOHALA WAIWAI
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

711 KAPIOLANI BLVD., 12TH FLOOR • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
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RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



AMY ASSELBAYE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PO'O HO'OKO

DEBORAH ZYSMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O

February 13, 2026

The Honorable Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
The Honorable Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice-Chair
and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Hawai'i State Senate
415 South Beretania Street, Room 224
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

SUBJECT: Honolulu Office of Economic Revitalization Support for Senate Bill 3296
Relating to Agriculture

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, and members of the Committee:

The City & County of Honolulu's Office of Economic Revitalization (OER) **supports** SB 3296, to establish a Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

Strengthening conservation and stewardship practices on Hawai'i's working lands is important to supporting resilient farms, healthy ecosystems, and sustainable local food production. This program aims to provide training, technical assistance, and on-farm infrastructure for farmers. To sustain long-term farming operations, this program implements proven conservation and stewardship methods for the ecological health of soil, water, and overall resilience to environmental degradation. The Conservation and Agriculture Stewardship Pilot Program addresses the gap in supporting small, diversified farms and culturally grounded 'āina-based stewardship practices that are often not covered by existing programs.

OER's Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Program is focused on ensuring our farmers thrive. By supporting regenerative agricultural practices, we aim to honor our responsibility to our land, support local farmers and businesses, and create greater access to high-quality, Hawai'i-made products for residents and visitors.

The Honorable Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
The Honorable Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice-Chair
and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment
February 13, 2026
Page 2

Should there be any questions, please contact Alex Narrajos, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Program Manager at (808) 768-2287 or via email at alex.narrajos@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

Amy Asselbaye
Executive Director



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

February 11, 2026

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

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of SB3296 Relating to Agriculture

On behalf of Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i, I respectfully submit testimony in **strong support of SB3296**, which establishes an **Agriculture and Conservation Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program** 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. For over 25 years, we have worked alongside producers to advance conservation agriculture and stewardship across Hawai'i's working lands. This work builds off the coalition of farmers, ranchers, forestry managers and TA service providers that participated in the federally funded **Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities initiative**. Prior to being cut, this program was beginning to channel funding directly to farmers, ranchers, and land stewards in recognition of the essential ecosystem services they provide. That effort acknowledged that **producers bear real costs when investing** in soil health, water protection, carbon sequestration, and other conservation practices that generate public environmental benefits. SB3296 reflects a similar understanding at the state level: stewardship on working lands deserves and requires direct, practical support.

This bill responds to long-standing gaps in conservation agriculture programs, particularly for small, diversified farms and culturally grounded 'āina-based stewardship practices that are not well served by existing federal programs. Hawai'i's producers face growing pressures from climate change, soil degradation, water constraints, and rising input costs. The pilot would provide coordinated training, technical assistance, cost-share, and small-scale infrastructure support statewide. The program strategically invests in:

- **People** — Building conservation planning and implementation capacity through training and technical assistance.
- **Practices** — Supporting adoption of proven stewardship methods that improve soil health, water quality, and climate resilience.
- **Infrastructure** — Funding small-scale conservation improvements that strengthen regenerative agriculture and local food systems.

The pilot is structured to deliver **measurable results**. By pairing technical assistance with cost-share support, it reduces financial and knowledge barriers that prevent implementation. Participating producers would develop conservation plans, implement defined practices, and report on outcomes such as soil health improvements, water retention, erosion reduction, and climate resilience measures. A

required legislative report and sunset date ensure accountability and allow the program to be refined or scaled based on demonstrated impact.

SB3296 also ensures that working lands are appropriately included in **Green Fee investments**. While agriculture plays a critical role in watershed protection and climate adaptation, it is sometimes less visible within broader conservation and climate funding discussions. This program translates climate goals into practical, farm-level action.

Modeled on the impact and administrative efficiency of high-functioning efforts such as the Da Bux program, the pilot allows HDAB to efficiently expand its impact using a proven implementation framework without significantly increasing administrative overhead. It complements broader climate initiatives, including those of the DLNR Climate Commission, by focusing specifically on operational outcomes for agricultural producers, including smaller producers.

Finally, we respectfully request that the program title be revised to the “Agriculture and Conservation Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program” to more clearly reflect its integrated focus.

Mahalo for your leadership and thoughtful consideration.

Warm wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Shaw', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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



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 13, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 3296
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
3:10 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 3296, which establishes a Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers operate in diverse tropical environments that require locally adapted conservation practices. A voluntary, incentive-based program that supports soil health, water conservation, erosion control, composting, and other stewardship practices can strengthen long-term agricultural productivity while protecting natural resources.

By providing training opportunities, cost-share support, and infrastructure funding, this pilot program offers practical tools to help producers implement conservation practices that improve resilience and sustainability. Investments in soil health and water management directly contribute to the long-term viability of Hawai'i agriculture.

HFB appreciates that this measure establishes a pilot program with reporting requirements, allowing the Legislature to evaluate outcomes and refine the program before broader expansion.

Mahalo for your consideration and for supporting Hawai'i's agricultural community.



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Wai'anae, O'ahu

Rachel LaDrig
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
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 SB3296.**

SB3296 is a valuable initiative that recognizes the intricate relationship between agriculture and the ecosystem by establishing the Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity. This program can encourage the adoption of farming practices that not only enhance productivity but also conserve Hawaii's unique biodiversity.

The appropriation of funds for this program is a crucial component that will provide the necessary resources to implement sustainable practices effectively. These funds will help equip farmers with the tools and knowledge needed to adopt environmentally friendly techniques and technologies, promoting innovative approaches to farming and biosecurity. By requiring a report to the Legislature, SB3296 ensures transparency and accountability, allowing for an assessment of the program's impact and providing an opportunity to refine strategies for the broader adoption of conservation practices. This bill not only supports the economic viability of the agricultural sector but also strengthens Hawaii's commitment to preserving its natural resources.

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

SB3296
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Friday, February 13, 2026, 3:10 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

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

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports SB3296** which establishes the Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

Well-managed cattle can contribute to increased soil health, in turn improving water retention and carbon sequestration. This program provides incentives, technical assistance, and education for these practices, which will make it more feasible for a wider range of producers to adopt practices that benefit the land. While we appreciate the federal funding program that provide these services, we have found that they are tailored to continental practices and costs. A state run program would be beneficial to Hawaii's producers. We have many who have shovel ready projects, but could utilize funding and technical support to get the job done.

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





401 Uluniu St. #311 Kailua, HI 96734 | info@hawaiigoodfoodalliance.org

Lucas McKinnon
Managing Director
Hawai'i Good Food Alliance
February 12, 2026

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

Re: In Support SB3296 Relating to Agriculture

My name is Lucas McKinnon, and I serve as Managing Director of the Hawai'i Good Food Alliance (HGFA), a statewide network of farmers, food hubs, health centers, and community-based partners working to strengthen Hawai'i's local food systems. I am writing in **strong support of SB3296**, which would establish a Conservation and Agriculture Stewardship Pilot Program to strengthen conservation and stewardship practices on Hawai'i's working lands

Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers are on the frontlines of climate change, soil degradation, water constraints, and rising production costs. At the same time, we are asking them to produce more local food to improve food security, reduce import dependence, and support public health. We cannot meet these expectations without investing in conservation infrastructure, technical assistance, and culturally grounded stewardship practices.

This program invests in three key areas:

- **People:** Supporting farmers and land stewards with training and incentives to strengthen conservation skills.
- **Practices:** Helping farms and ranches implement proven stewardship methods that improve soil health, water quality, and climate resilience.
- **Infrastructure:** Funding small-scale conservation projects that support regenerative agriculture and local food systems.

This pilot program is also foundational to broader statewide efforts to align agriculture, climate resilience, and public health. As Hawai'i moves toward expanding Food is Medicine programs and increasing local procurement through public institutions, we must ensure that our farms are supported in adopting conservation practices that sustain both the land and the people who depend on it.

Mahalo for your leadership and consideration,

Lucas McKinnon

The Hawai'i Good Food Alliance is a diverse hui of individuals and organizations who share in the production, aggregation, and distribution of food, and share in the practice of mālama 'āina to re-build thriving community food systems.





**HAWAI'I
FOOD+
POLICY**

Honolulu, HI 96813
food@purplemaia.org

February 11th, 2026

To: Chair Gabbard Mike, Vice Chair Richards III Herbert and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Subject: **SB3296**

Aloha,

As a member of the Hawai'i Food+ team, I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 3296. This bill establishes a Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and appropriates funding to support its implementation.

Hawai'i's agricultural systems are extremely unique and interconnected. As an island state, our food systems and public health are dependent on healthy soils, clean water, and resilient ecosystems. Many federal systems regarding agriculture and stewardship programs are created to fit continental contexts. These federal systems are not applicable to 'āina based practices or tropical agroecosystems. These continental agricultural practices also do not take into consideration cultural relationships to land stewardship in Hawai'i. Hawai'i is deeply grounded in farming practices that are culturally appropriate and sustainable because the health of our islands is dependent on them. In Hawai'i, farming practices directly affect our water, ecosystems, coastlines, and climate. When agricultural lands are managed sustainably, they reduce erosion, limit polluted runoff, improve groundwater recharge, and protect nearshore marine environments. When farmers do not adopt sustainability-based practices in Hawai'i, the impacts are felt both environmentally and economically. These are factors that federal conservation programs do not always take into consideration. For this reason, state support is needed for Hawai'i-based conservation farming practices.

This bill would establish a pilot program focused on environmental and agricultural stewardship. This means training incentives will be implemented to encourage sustainable and conservation farming practices. Direct government support will be provided for implementing conservation practices. This will motivate farmers to adopt these practices and give them the support needed to make them effective. To conclude, SB3296 supports farmers, protects Hawai'i's natural resources, and strengthens Hawai'i's food security.

Mahalo,

Carlin McFadden & 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.

Personal Testimony

February 11, 2026

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

**Re: In Support of SB3296
Relating to a Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot
Program**

I write in support of SB3296 which would create a pilot program to strengthen conservation and stewardship practices on working agricultural lands across Hawai‘i.

This pilot program would provide both capitalization and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers, and others that steward ‘āina in the islands, filling gaps that would encourage and incentivize food production alongside ‘āina stewardship.

Farmers and ranchers in Hawai‘i have dedicated themselves to a livelihood where margins are already thin. While producers are savvy, building strong marketing networks and relying on public and private programs, they continue to face challenges associated with the costs of production, labor availability, and sufficient and reliable infrastructure.

This program will allow for investment in three important areas that will improve land stewardship and overall farm viability.

People – providing producers and land stewards with the technical training to strengthen their conservation skills.

Practices – supporting producers in their implementation of proven stewardship methods that improve soil health, water quality, and facilitate climate resilience.

Infrastructure – funding on-farm resource conservation practices that increase the ecological and economic viability of farms, ranches, and broader local food systems.

With your support of this bill, Hawai‘i’s producers will feel more supported in their commitment to feeding Hawai‘i’s people. Mahalo for your consideration of this initiative, and for your ongoing leadership for Hawai‘i and support of our farmers and ranchers!



Dr. Nicole Milne

Email: nicole@hawaiigoodfoodalliance.org, Tel: 808-987-9210

SB-3296

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:33:25 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/13/2026 3:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Dutra Elliott	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

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

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of SB3296 Relating to Agriculture

I respectfully submit testimony in strong support of SB3296, which establishes an Agriculture and Conservation Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB).

This bill responds to long-standing gaps in conservation agriculture programs, particularly for small, diversified farms and culturally grounded ‘āina-based stewardship practices that are not well served by existing federal programs. Hawai‘i’s producers face growing pressures from climate change, soil degradation, water constraints, and rising input costs. The pilot would provide coordinated training, technical assistance, cost-share, and small-scale infrastructure support statewide. The program strategically invests in:

- People — Building conservation planning and implementation capacity through training and technical assistance.
- Practices — Supporting adoption of proven stewardship methods that improve soil health, water quality, and climate resilience.
- Infrastructure — Funding small-scale conservation improvements that strengthen regenerative agriculture and local food systems.

The pilot is structured to deliver measurable results. By pairing technical assistance with cost-share support, it reduces financial and knowledge barriers that prevent implementation. Participating producers would develop conservation plans, implement defined practices, and report on outcomes such as soil health improvements, water retention, erosion reduction, and climate resilience measures. A required legislative report and sunset date ensure accountability and allow the program to be refined or scaled based on demonstrated impact.

SB3296 also ensures that working lands are appropriately included in Green Fee investments. While agriculture plays a critical role in watershed protection and climate adaptation, it is

sometimes less visible within broader conservation and climate funding discussions. This program translates climate goals into practical, farm-level action.

Modeled on the impact and administrative efficiency of high-functioning efforts such as the Da Bux program, the pilot allows HDAB to efficiently expand its impact using a proven implementation framework without significantly increasing administrative overhead. It complements broader climate initiatives, including those of the DLNR Climate Commission, by focusing specifically on operational outcomes for agricultural producers, including smaller producers.

Mahalo for your leadership and thoughtful consideration.

SB-3296

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:58:57 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/13/2026 3:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lina Liu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

Re: In Support SB3296 Relating to Agriculture

I strongly support SB3296, which would create a pilot program to strengthen conservation and stewardship practices on Hawai‘i’s working lands.

The program would provide training, technical assistance, and on-farm infrastructure support for farmers, ranchers, and land stewards across Hawai‘i.

It helps fill gaps in support for small, diversified farms and culturally grounded ‘āina-based stewardship practices that are often not covered by existing programs.

Hawai‘i’s agricultural producers face growing challenges, including climate change, soil degradation, water constraints, and rising costs, making programs like this critical.

This program invests in three key areas:

- People: Supporting farmers and land stewards with training and incentives to strengthen conservation skills.
- Practices: Helping farms and ranches implement proven stewardship methods that improve soil health, water quality, and climate resilience.
- Infrastructure: Funding small-scale conservation projects that support regenerative agriculture and local food systems.

By passing this bill, Hawai‘i can support resilient farms, healthy ecosystems, and sustainable local food production.

Mahalo for your leadership and consideration.

Lina Liu

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

Re: Support for SB3296 – Agriculture and Conservation Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program

Aloha,

My name is Gabriel Sachter-Smith, and I am a farmer/rancher in Waialua, Oahu. I am writing to express my support for SB3296, which establishes the Agriculture and Conservation Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

This program is important to me because federal support for similar programs have become unstable and unreliable. The pressures of the market and our local food system encourages us farmers to grow more abundant, higher quality, and cheaper food, while also implementing soil and environmental improvement practices which costs time and money but do not always improve the bottom line of a farm business, despite well known community environmental benefits.

Programs like this are critical for Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers. They provide training, technical assistance, cost-share support, and small-scale infrastructure improvements that help us implement proven stewardship practices. Supporting farmers directly acknowledges the real costs we bear to protect soil, water, and the environment while producing food and maintaining resilient local food systems.

I strongly encourage the committee to support SB3296. Investing in the stewardship of Hawai'i's working lands benefits not only farmers like me but also our communities, watersheds, and future generations.

Mahalo nui for your leadership and consideration.

Warm regards,

Gabriel Sachter-Smith 

Big Tree Farm LLC

gabe@hawaiibananasource.com