
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that agricultural
2 workforce housing is essential to developing and sustaining the
3 workforce needed to move Hawaii's agricultural sector forward.
4 Agriculture across the State, particularly on the neighbor
5 islands, faces persistent labor shortages driven in part by
6 limited and high-cost housing options that make it difficult to
7 recruit and retain workers. Without reliable and proximate
8 housing, farms struggle to maintain stable operations, expand
9 production, or meet institutional and local food demand.

10 The legislature further finds that agricultural workforce
11 housing produces broad public benefits that extend far beyond
12 individual employers. These benefits include improved food
13 security, greater production reliability, strengthened rural and
14 neighbor island economies, enhanced worker safety, and more
15 resilient communities. Because these benefits accrue statewide
16 and support the State's long-term goals for food production and
17 economic diversification, it is appropriate to recognize



1 agricultural workforce housing as a public good worthy of
2 incentive, rather than impose new regulatory mandates on
3 farmers.

4 The legislature also finds that Hawaii's agricultural
5 workforce is experiencing significant decline and demographic
6 pressure. According to the United States Department of
7 Agriculture's 2022 Census of Agriculture, the total number of
8 farms in Hawaii has decreased by approximately ten per cent over
9 the most recent reporting period, and nearly half of the State's
10 agricultural producers are sixty-five years of age or older.
11 These trends underscore the urgent need for policies that
12 attract, retain, and stabilize the next generation of
13 agricultural workers. Workforce housing remains one of the most
14 critical barriers to building a reliable agricultural labor
15 force, especially on the neighbor islands where housing scarcity
16 and high costs pose substantial challenges.

17 The purpose of this Act is to support Hawaii's agricultural
18 workforce by incorporating agricultural workforce housing as a
19 scored public benefit within existing state evaluation and
20 decision-making processes.



1 SECTION 2. (a) Any state agency administering
2 agricultural leases, licenses, development programs, or
3 procurement involving agricultural products, in accordance with
4 sections 103D-302 and 103D-303, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
5 including but not limited to the department of agriculture and
6 biosecurity and agribusiness development corporation, shall
7 award additional points or preferences to agricultural projects
8 that voluntarily provide:

- 9 (1) On-site or proximate workforce housing for
10 agricultural workers; or
- 11 (2) Formal partnerships that secure housing for a portion
12 of the agricultural workforce associated with the
13 project.

14 (b) Any state agency awarding points and preferences
15 pursuant to subsection (a) shall develop scoring rubrics and
16 guidelines for awarding additional points or preferences, which
17 shall include:

- 18 (1) Preference for projects that provide housing for
19 workers from multiple independent farm operations;

- 1 (2) Formal partnerships that secure housing for a portion
2 of the agricultural workforce associated with the
3 project; and
- 4 (3) A cap ensuring that no single agricultural operation
5 or affiliated entity shall be allocated more than
6 fifty per cent of the total units within a state-
7 funded or state-incentivized agricultural workforce
8 housing project.
- 9 (c) To qualify for additional points or preferences under
10 subsection (a), an agricultural project shall demonstrate plans
11 to provide housing for at least twenty per cent of the
12 agricultural workforce associated with the project; provided
13 that state agencies under subsection (a) may authorize:
- 14 (1) Phased implementation over time;
- 15 (2) Scaled requirements based on farm size, project type,
16 or labor needs; and
- 17 (3) Region-specific flexibility to account for neighbor
18 island conditions, available housing stock, and
19 infrastructure capacity.



1 (d) Notwithstanding any other law or rule to the contrary,
2 state agencies may update existing scoring rubrics, guidelines,
3 or program rules to implement this Act.

4 (e) Nothing in this Act shall be construed to:

5 (1) Create a mandate that agricultural operators provide
6 workforce housing;

7 (2) Penalize applicants that do not provide workforce
8 housing; or

9 (3) Supersede or alter existing health, safety, or land-
10 use requirements applicable to housing development.

11 (f) For the purposes of this section:

12 "Agricultural project" means any agricultural,
13 aquacultural, or agroforestry project that includes subdivision
14 and capital improvements to the land and is applying for or
15 participating in a:

16 (1) State agricultural land lease or license;

17 (2) State-supported agricultural development program; or

18 (3) State procurement, in accordance with sections
19 103D-302 and 103D-303, Hawaii Revised Statutes, grant,
20 or institutional purchasing contract that includes
21 agricultural production.



1 "Agricultural workforce housing" means on-site, proximate,
2 or partnered housing arrangements intended to accommodate
3 agricultural workers employed by, contracted with, or directly
4 supporting an agricultural project.

5 "State agency" means all executive departments, boards, and
6 commissions of the State and all public corporations created by
7 the legislature. "State agency" does not include any contractor
8 with the State.

9 SECTION 3. The department of agriculture and biosecurity
10 shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations,
11 including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later
12 than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session
13 of 2027. The report shall include:

- 14 (1) Implementation of the incentive scoring provisions in
15 this Act;
- 16 (2) The number of applicants that received additional
17 points or preference pursuant to this Act;
- 18 (3) Challenges encountered; and
- 19 (4) Recommendations for improving or expanding the
20 incentive framework.



1 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

DAB; ADC; State Agencies; Agricultural Workforce Housing Incentives; Agricultural Leases; State Procurement; Preferences; Report

Description:

Requires state agencies that administer agricultural leases, licenses, development programs, or procurement involving agricultural products to award points or preferences to agricultural projects incorporating agricultural workforce housing. Requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to submit a report to the Legislature. Effective 7/1/3000.
(HD2)

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