

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 11 2026

RE: S.B. No. 2153

S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Agriculture and Environment, to which was referred S.B. No. 2153 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Require the Board of Agriculture and Biosecurity to develop and adopt a multi-tiered, matrix-based assessment framework to develop definitions for the terms "bona fide farmer" and "bona fide agricultural activity";
- (2) Require the Board to collaborate with stakeholders to draft the terms "bona fide farmer" and "bona fide agricultural activity"; and
- (3) Require a report to the Legislature.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Hawai'i Farmers Union United; Hawai'i Farm Bureau; Hawaii Cattlemen's Council Inc.; and one individual.

Your Committee received testimony in opposition to this measure from the Libertarian Party of Hawaii.



Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

Your Committee finds that agricultural zoning laws are important to protect and preserve land for critical food production. Your Committee further finds that currently, there are landholders in the State that have taken advantage of vague agricultural zoning designations, which has potentially reduced available agricultural land and undermined the State's efforts to preserve land for legitimate agricultural activities. While there are numerous policies and programs that are intended to specifically support agriculture, the lack of clarity around certain definitions that are necessary to adequately regulate agriculture has reduced the State's ability to support food production in the State. Therefore, this measure will increase support to farmers by requiring the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to collaboratively define the terms "bona fide farmer" and "bona fide agricultural activity" fully and clearly, to be codified into State law.

Your Committee notes the comments and recommendations from the Hawai'i Farmers Union United regarding the importance of visibility and comprehension by the state government of the agricultural sector in order to pass critical legislation. Your Committee further notes the recommendation of establishing a farmer registration program, tied to the terms "bona fide farmer" and "bona fide agricultural activity", which would complement the multi-tiered framework established in this measure. Your Committee understands the necessity of thoughtful contribution and collaboration with stakeholders to develop a farmer registration system. Therefore, should your Committee on Ways and Means choose to deliberate on this measure, your Committee respectfully requests that it consider the recommendations from the Hawai'i Farmers Union United.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2050, to encourage further discussion; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.



As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture and Environment that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2153, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2153, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Agriculture and
Environment,

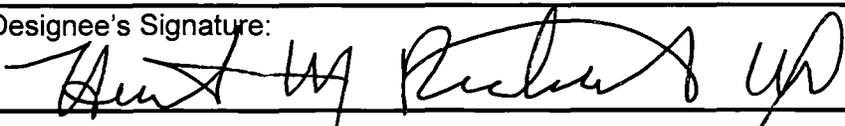
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Gabbard", written over a horizontal line.

MIKE GABBARD, Chair



The Senate
 Thirty-Third Legislature
 State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
Committee on Agriculture and Environment
AEN

Bill / Resolution No.:*	Committee Referral:	Date:		
SB 2153	AEN, WAM	01/28/26		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure. If so, then the previous decision was to: _____				
The Recommendation is: <input type="checkbox"/> Pass, unamended 2312 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pass, with amendments 2311 <input type="checkbox"/> Hold 2310 <input type="checkbox"/> Recommit 2313				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
GABBARD, Mike (C)	X			
RICHARDS, III, Herbert M. "Tim" (VC)	X			
DECOITE, Lynn	X			
RHOADS, Karl	X			
AWA, Brenton			X	
TOTAL	4	—	1	—
Recommendation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: 				
Distribution: Original Yellow Pink File with Committee Report Committee Drafting Agency				

*Only one measure per Record of Votes