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
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

HOUSE BILL NO.1572, HD1
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No.1572, HD1. The bill requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) to: (1) Establish a four-year Restorative Aquaculture Development Program to reduce aquaculture permit processing time, support aquaculture infrastructure expansion, increase the aquaculture workforce, and pursue federal aquaculture grants; (2) Establish three pilot demonstration sites for restorative aquaculture; and (3) Convene a Restorative Aquaculture Advisory Council. Requires reports to the Legislature. It also appropriates funds. The Department supports this measure.

HB1572, HD1 addresses Hawaii's critical food security challenge while delivering measurable environmental outcomes. Hawaii currently imports more than 90 percent of its seafood, creating vulnerability to supply chain disruptions. Restorative aquaculture, operations that demonstrably improve environmental conditions alongside food production, provides a direct pathway to increase local supply. The bill specifies quantified targets: restoration of 200 acres of coastal habitat, water quality improvement demonstrations in three sites, and 2,500 tons of annual carbon dioxide sequestration by 2030. These are not aspirational goals, but operational metrics tied to federal monitoring protocols. Native species production, fish and seaweed, generates local food while supporting cultural restoration and ecosystem services that benefit all Hawaiian communities.

HB1572, HD1 creates 250 direct jobs and establishes workforce development infrastructure for Hawaii's blue economy. The bill prioritizes Native Hawaiian practitioners and small-scale producers by dedicating 25 percent of infrastructure and

workforce funding to these communities, removing long-standing barriers to participation. Shared hatchery facilities, aggregation infrastructure, and coordinated permitting reduce capital and regulatory barriers that currently prevent commercial operations from reaching scale. Apprenticeship and training programs ensure accessible career pathways in rural communities where economic opportunity is limited. The $10 million federal grant strategy leverages outside investment without proportional state budget exposure, multiplying the impact of appropriated resources.

Federal recognition of Hawaii's restorative aquaculture potential demonstrates market validation and funding partnership. In January 2026, Congress appropriated $500,000 directly to Hawaii Department of Agriculture for a regenerative aquaculture feasibility study - explicitly validating the ADP's strategic direction and the policy framework in this bill. This federal earmark was part of a broader $5.275 million aquaculture and marine resource investment package, signaling bipartisan federal commitment to Hawaii aquaculture development. HB1572 operationalizes this federal support through specific performance objectives: reducing permit processing to 12-15 months, establishing 25 new operations, restoring 15 traditional fishponds, and pursuing additional federal competitive grants from NOAA, USDA, NSF, and Department of Energy. Independent third-party evaluation by December 2027 ensures program effectiveness and accountability. The restorative aquaculture advisory council, comprising industry operators, environmental experts, Hawaiian practitioners, research institutions, and government agencies, provides transparent governance preventing the permitting delays and inter-agency conflicts that have historically undermined Hawaii aquaculture ventures. This bill demonstrates professional program management, rigorous evaluation, and strategic federal partnership aligned with national aquaculture development priorities.

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

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
ʻŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAIʻI

Legislative Testimony
Hōʻike Manaʻo I Mua O Ka ʻAhaʻōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.
By
Darren T. Lerner, PhD
Director, Sea Grant College Program,
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology
and
Vassilis L. Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost
University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

HB 1572 HD1 – RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT.

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawaiʻi Sea Grant College Program (Hawaiʻi Sea Grant) supports with comments HB 1572 HD1 relating to aquaculture development.

Aquaculture development is a vital step in improving Hawaiʻi food systems by increasing the amount of food grown in-State and reducing the dependency on food import. The establishment of an aquaculture restorative development program, as proposed, will increase the profitability and commercial output of Hawaii's aquaculture system in sustainable means, specifically through an advisory council that will pursue federal funds for aquaculture development, as well as through revitalization and novel creation of restorative aquaculture operations. This bill increases the capacity of the State to support aquaculture development, which is an important step in both reversing the decreases in the State's aquaculture industry over the last decade, and expanding Hawaiʻi's food security. However, the bill does not expressly state what percentage, if any, of food generated within the restorative aquaculture program is to be sold within the state. This lack of clarity leaves legal ambiguity for exportation of locally generated food, and without specific implementation guidelines, the bill may fall short in its intended purpose to improve food security in Hawaiʻi.

Improvements of local agriculture, including through sustainable aquaculture development, are avenues to both retain and expand the local economy structures through aquaculture production, job creation, and economic viability analysis. The proposed bill will expand aquaculture Hawaiʻi through multiple means to increase agricultural profits, as well as expand the job market and associated career paths in aquaculture and related value-chain sectors, especially in rural areas and underserved communities. Furthermore, over the last decade, aquaculture profits have declined, and the proposed bill has potential to reverse these profit margins by demonstrating

economic viability of restorative aquaculture through production metrics, market development, and value-chain analysis supporting long-term private sector participation.

The Hawai‘i Sea Grant would happily work in collaboration with the proposed Restorative Aquaculture Advisory Council on restorative aquaculture in Hawai‘i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIAʻĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIAʻĀINA

STATE OF HAWAIʻI | KA MOKUʻĀINA ʻO HAWAIʻI
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DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKAʻOLE
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

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKAʻOLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Wednesday, February 18, 2026
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1572, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

House Bill 1572, House Draft 1 proposes to require the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to: (1) Establish a four-year Restorative Aquaculture Development Program to reduce aquaculture permit processing time, support aquaculture infrastructure expansion, increase the aquaculture workforce, and pursue federal aquaculture grants; (2) Establish three pilot demonstration sites for restorative aquaculture; and (3) Convene a Restorative Aquaculture Advisory Council. It also requires reports to the Legislature and appropriates funds. The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the intent of this measure and provides the following comments.

The Department has long implemented and supported restorative aquaculture work, including native species propagation, restoration of traditional aquaculture systems, and indigenous knowledge–based resource management through direct management, applied research, community partnerships, and technical assistance. To ensure effectiveness and continuity of ongoing efforts, any new programs or advisory councils established under this measure should complement existing departmental roles rather than duplicate or supplant them.

Therefore, the Department respectfully requests that the measure be amended to direct the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to consult with the Department when establishing and implementing the restorative aquaculture development program and pilot

demonstration sites. The Department offers a proposed House Draft 2, which incorporates the recommendations described above (see attached).

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026
STATE OF HAWAII

H.B. NO. 1572 H.D. 1 Proposed H.D. 2

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the State's aquaculture industry has experienced significant decline over the past decade. Recent statistics reflect that the aquaculture industry's value decreased seventeen per cent from 2018 to 2023 and a stagnant number of aquaculture farms have been operating over the past decade. Further, exports of specific pathogen-free shrimp broodstock, a globally significant Hawaii product, has shown a significant decline since 2015. The legislature further finds that this decline has occurred despite the State having comparative advantages in tropical aquaculture, including pristine water resources, established research infrastructure such as the natural energy laboratory of Hawaii authority and the university of Hawaii, and proximity to premium markets.

The legislature recognizes that Act 96, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025 (Act 96), increased the transient accommodations tax, colloquially termed a "green fee", to generate revenues for

environmental stewardship, climate and hazard resilience, and sustainable tourism purposes. The legislature finds that aquaculture development, particularly restorative aquaculture emphasizing ecosystem services, directly advances all three purposes intended for the funds generated via Act 96, with documented benefits including water quality improvement through bivalve filtration and seaweed nutrient uptake; carbon sequestration through seaweed cultivation; ocean acidification buffering through localized pH elevation during seaweed photosynthesis; habitat provision through oyster reef and fishpond structures; support for native species including ʻamaʻama (mullet), awa (milkfish), and indigenous limu varieties; and support for local food systems that reduce environmental impacts from food transportation while enhancing visitor experiences through authentic agricultural tourism.

The legislature further finds that sustainable aquaculture expansion simultaneously addresses multiple state policy priorities, including food security by reducing the State's ninety per cent food import dependency; climate resilience by providing nature-based coastal protection and adaptive food production systems less vulnerable to terrestrial climate

impacts; rural economic development by creating employment opportunities in underserved communities; workforce development by establishing career pathways in emerging blue economy sectors; and environmental justice by supporting community-based resource management and subsistence practices.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the department of agriculture and biosecurity to:

(1) Establish a four-year restorative aquaculture development program to reduce aquaculture permit processing time, support restorative aquaculture infrastructure expansion, increase aquaculture education and its workforce, and pursue federal aquaculture grants;

(2) Establish three pilot demonstration sites for restorative aquaculture; and

(3) Convene a restorative aquaculture advisory council.

SECTION 2. (a) The department of agriculture and biosecurity, in consultation with the department of land and natural resources, shall establish and implement a restorative aquaculture development program. The program shall prioritize:

(1) Restorative aquaculture operations over non-restorative commercial aquaculture;

(2) Native species and traditional Native Hawaiian systems, including loko iʻa, indigenous limu varieties, and endemic Native Hawaiian aquatic species;

(3) Equitable participation and benefit-sharing with Native Hawaiian practitioners, small-scale producers, and underrepresented communities; and

(4) Public-private partnerships that leverage federal funds, foundation support, and private investment.

(b) The program shall establish measurable performance objectives to be achieved no later than June 30, 2030, including:

(1) Reduction of average aquaculture permit processing time to a target range of twelve to fifteen months; provided that the procedures shall comply with section 91-13.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes;

(2) Pursuing at least $10,000,000 in federal competitive grants for aquaculture development from the following sources:

(A) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) coastal partnership grants;

(B) NOAA aquaculture research competitive grants;

(C) United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service programs;

(D) USDA Rural Energy for America program;

(E) United States National Science Foundation and Department of Energy programs supporting sustainable marine systems and climate resilience; and

(F) Other federal programs supporting fisheries restoration, watershed management, and blue carbon research;

provided that the department of agriculture and biosecurity shall coordinate with the department of land and natural resources, the university of Hawaii, and private sector partners to develop competitive grant proposals and manage federal funding partnerships;

(3) Development of no less than twenty-five new or significantly expanded restorative aquaculture operations, including:

(A) Planning, design, and construction of shared-use hatchery facilities for native and restorative aquaculture species, with priority for small-scale producers and indigenous Native Hawaiian species including limu, ‘ama‘ama, awa, and ‘o‘opu;

(B) Development of shared-use processing, aggregation, and cold storage facilities accessible to small-scale producers;

(C) Establishment and support of aquaculture development zones with coordinated permitting and shared infrastructure;

(D) Development of infrastructure to establish or restore no less than fifteen traditional Native Hawaiian fishponds statewide, integrating subsistence, cultural, and controlled aquaculture production and support for their operations,

including water control structures, sluice gates, and educational facilities; and

(E) Capital improvements at existing state facilities, including the natural energy laboratory of Hawaii authority, to accommodate additional aquaculture tenants;

(4) Facilitating the creation of no less than two hundred fifty direct jobs in aquaculture and related value-chain sectors, especially in rural communities, including:

(A) Development and delivery of aquaculture training programs and youth engagement, including curriculum for secondary schools and community colleges;

(B) Apprenticeship programs connecting students with commercial operations, including utilization of the farmer apprentice mentoring program under section 141-15, Hawaii Revised Statutes, with an emphasis on native species, biosecurity, and restoration techniques;

(C) Technical assistance for small-scale and Native Hawaiian practitioners, including business planning, production techniques, regulatory compliance, and market development;

(D) Scholarships and stipends for students pursuing aquaculture education, with priority for Native Hawaiian or economically disadvantaged students; and

(E) Support for traditional knowledge transmission through mentorship programs pairing experienced traditional Native Hawaiian fishpond practitioners with new practitioners;

(5) Achieving measurable environmental benefits including:

(A) Restoration of no less than two hundred acres of coastal aquaculture habitat associated with restorative aquaculture systems;

(B) Deployment of restorative aquaculture systems demonstrating water quality improvement in no less than three embayments;

(C) Documentation of carbon sequestration through seaweed cultivation totaling no less than two

thousand five hundred tons of carbon dioxide annually by 2030; and

(D) Establishment of baseline monitoring protocols for long-term assessment of aquaculture ecosystem services; and

(6) Demonstration of economic viability of restorative aquaculture through production metrics, market development, and value-chain analysis supporting long-term private sector participation.

(c) The department of agriculture and biosecurity shall submit a report to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular sessions of 2027, 2028, 2029, and 2030 on:

(1) Progress toward achieving the performance objectives specified in subsection (b), with disaggregated data by island and operation type;

(2) Federal grant applications submitted and awards received, including funding amounts and project descriptions;

(3) Infrastructure development projects completed or in progress, including location, capacity, and utilization rates;

(4) Number of new commercial aquaculture operations supported, categorized by scale and type;

(5) Jobs created, including number of positions, wage ranges, and demographic characteristics;

(6) Environmental benefits documented, including:

(A) Water quality improvements measured through nitrogen, phosphorus, and turbidity reductions;

(B) Carbon sequestration quantified through biomass production data;

(C) Habitat restoration acreage by location and habitat type; and

(D) Native species production volumes;

(7) Support provided to Native Hawaiian practitioners and traditional aquaculture systems, including number of traditional Native Hawaiian fishponds supported, technical assistance provided, and funding allocated;

(8) Workforce development activities including training programs delivered, participants served, and employment outcomes;

(9) Stakeholder engagement activities, including advisory council meetings, community consultations, and feedback received; and

(10) Challenges encountered and strategies for addressing those challenges.

(d) The department of agriculture and biosecurity shall contract with an independent third-party to conduct an evaluation of the restorative aquaculture development program under subsection (a) no later than December 31, 2027. The evaluation shall:

(1) Assess progress toward performance objectives with analysis of factors contributing to success or hindering achievement;

(2) Assess return on investment for infrastructure development, including utilization rates and economic impact;

(3) Evaluate federal funding leveraged and competitive positioning relative to other states;

(4) Validate environmental benefits through scientific monitoring and third-party verification;

(5) Assess economic impact, including jobs created, industry value growth, and multiplier effects;

(6) Evaluate equity outcomes, including support for small-scale and Native Hawaiian practitioners;

(7) Identify best practices and derive insights to inform future practices; and

(8) Provide recommendations for program adjustments or continuation.

The findings of the evaluation shall be submitted to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2028.

SECTION 3. The department of agriculture and biosecurity, in consultation with the department of land and natural resources, shall establish three pilot demonstration sites for restorative aquaculture with verified carbon and ecosystem service monitoring protocols. The monitoring protocols shall measure:

(1) Net ecosystem production and carbon burial rates using accepted field protocols;

(2) Water quality improvements;

(3) Habitat provision and biodiversity benefits; and

(4) Community economic and food security outcomes.

Monitoring data shall be made publicly available and used to support carbon tax credit applications, federal funding proposals, and adaptive management decisions. Baseline data collected shall inform long-term climate finance opportunities and blue carbon market participation.

SECTION 4. (a) The department of agriculture and biosecurity shall convene a restorative aquaculture advisory council. The advisory council shall consist of the following members:

(1) The chairperson of the board of agriculture and biosecurity, who shall serve as the chairperson of the advisory council;

(2) representatives from relevant state agencies, including the department of land and natural resources, department of health, and office of planning and sustainable development;

(3) representatives from each county planning department;

(4) One member of the house of representatives, to appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;

(5) One member of the senate, to appointed by the president of the senate;

(6) representatives from the university of Hawaii with aquaculture research expertise;

(7) representatives from commercial aquaculture operations, including at least one representative from each county, to be invited by the chairperson;

(8) representatives from small-scale aquaculture operations, including not less than two Native Hawaiian practitioners;

(9) representatives from Native Hawaiian organizations engaged in traditional aquaculture practices, to be invited by the chairperson;

(10) representatives from environmental organizations with expertise in marine conservation and restoration, to be invited by the chairperson; and

(11) One representative from each county with a demonstrated interest in restorative aquaculture, to be invited by the chairperson.

(b) The restorative aquaculture advisory council shall meet at least quarterly to:

(1) Advise on project selection, funding allocation, and performance metrics;

(2) Monitor progress toward the restorative aquaculture development program objectives and environmental stewardship;

(3) Facilitate knowledge exchange and best practice sharing; and

(4) Support federal funding partnerships and grant applications.

(c) The members of the restorative aquaculture advisory council shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses, including travel expenses, necessary for the performance of their duties.

SECTION 5. As used in this Act, "restorative aquaculture" means aquaculture operations that demonstrably improve

environmental conditions or provide measurable ecosystem services, including:

(1) Water quality improvement through bivalve filtration or nutrient reduction via macroalgae cultivation;

(2) Carbon sequestration or cycling through seaweed and macroalgae systems;

(3) Habitat restoration and creation through oyster reef structures or macroalgae bed or traditional fishpond systems;

(4) Native species recovery, including indigenous limu varities, ‘ama‘ama (mullet), awa (milkfish), ‘o‘opu, and other Native Hawaiian species; and

(5) Climate resilience infrastructure providing coastal wave attenuation, acidification buffering, or adaptive food production systems;

as a primary or co-equal production objective, as determined by the department of agriculture and biosecurity in consultation with the department of land and natural resources.

SECTION 6. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $ or so

much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to be expended as follows:

(1) $ for aquaculture infrastructure development; provided that twenty-five per cent of funds shall be directed to support Native Hawaiian practitioners and traditional aquaculture systems;

(2) $ for aquaculture workforce development and technical assistance; provided that twenty-five per cent of funds shall be directed to support Native Hawaiian practitioners and traditional aquaculture systems;

(3) $ for the pursuit of federal grants, including:

(A) Staffing for federal grant identification, development, and management;

(B) Matching funds for competitive federal grants that may be awarded under the proposed Marine Aquaculture Research for America Act or related programs;

(C) Consultant services for grant proposal development;

(D) Partnership development with the university of Hawaii, federal agencies, and private sector entities; and

(E) Compliance with federal grant reporting and performance requirements;

(4) $ for the establishment, operation, and monitoring of restorative aquaculture pilot demonstration sites; and

(5) $ for the establishment and administration of the restorative aquaculture development program, including but not limited to:

(A) Program coordination activities;

(B) Restorative aquaculture advisory council support;

(C) Program technical assistance;

(D) Program performance reporting; and

(E) Stakeholder engagement and community outreach.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of agriculture and biosecurity for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000; provided that sections 2, 3, and 4 shall be repealed on June 30, 2030.

__.B. NO._____

Report Title:
DAB; Restorative Aquaculture Development Program; Workforce Development; Restorative Aquaculture Advisory Council; Appropriation; Reports

Description:
Requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to: (1) Establish a four-year Restorative Aquaculture Development Program to reduce aquaculture permit processing time, support aquaculture infrastructure expansion, increase the aquaculture workforce, and pursue federal aquaculture grants; (2) Establish three pilot demonstration sites for restorative aquaculture; and (3) Convene a Restorative Aquaculture Advisory Council. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

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February 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY ON HB 1572, HD1
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawaiʻi Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawaiʻi's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawaiʻi Farm Bureau provides comments on HB 1572, HD1.

Hawai'i's aquaculture sector is an important component of the State's agricultural economy and food system. Our favorable climate, geographic isolation, research capacity, and strong local demand for seafood position Hawai'i well to support a wide range of aquaculture activities, including innovative and restorative approaches that contribute to food production, environmental stewardship, and economic development.

We appreciate the amendments adopted by the House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems and recognize the measure's intent to invest in infrastructure, workforce development, permit streamlining, and federal grant competitiveness. Reducing processing times and expanding shared infrastructure would benefit producers statewide.

At the same time, Hawai'i's aquaculture industry includes a diverse mix of commercial operations, small-scale farms, research enterprises, and community-based systems. As this program is implemented, it will be important to ensure that support for restorative aquaculture complements, rather than displaces, other forms of commercial aquaculture that contribute to local food production, employment, exports, and economic stability.

A balanced approach that strengthens the entire aquaculture sector will help ensure long-term success and industry growth. HFB looks forward to continued collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and industry stakeholders as this measure moves forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

HFUU
Hawai'i Farmers Union United
Kaua'i · O'ahu · Moloka'i · Maui · Hawai'i

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs 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 HB1572.**

HB1572 proposes a comprehensive framework to invigorate Hawaii's aquaculture industry through a focus on restorative practices that enhance ecosystem services, emphasize indigenous methodologies, and support local food systems.

By investing in infrastructure and workforce development, this bill pivots Hawaii away from extractive industrial models and toward restorative aquaculture that provides measurable ecosystem services and local food.

The emphasis on reducing permit processing times, expanding infrastructure, and building aquaculture workforce aligns with creating sustainable local economies. However, specific details on streamlining the permitting process should incorporate feedback from stakeholders to avoid bureaucratic delays.

Prioritizing traditional systems such as loko i'a supports cultural preservation and sustainable agricultural practices. Ensuring that funding and resources are properly allocated to these areas is crucial for authentic implementation.

HB1572 represents a meaningful step towards revitalizing Hawaii's aquaculture, helping transform Hawaii's blue economy from a conceptual goal into an economically viable reality.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heaivilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union

HAWAI'I FOOD+ POLICY
Honolulu, HI 96813
food@purplemaia.org

February 2026

To: Chair David Tarnas, Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe and the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs.

Subject: **HB1572**, Relating to Aquaculture Development

Aloha,

I am submitting this testimony in strong **support of HB1572, HD1**. As amended, HB1572 establishes a four-year Restorative Aquaculture Development Program that not only supports aquaculture growth, but does so with clear accountability, cultural grounding, and public oversight. The HD1 amendments strengthen the bill by adding defined program goals, pilot demonstration sites, an advisory council with diverse representation, annual reporting to the Legislature, and independent evaluation. These elements are essential for responsible stewardship of Hawai‘i’s marine and coastal resources.

This bill aligns with the State’s public trust responsibility to protect natural and cultural resources for present and future generations. Hawai‘i courts have repeatedly affirmed that the State holds natural resources, including coastal and marine environments, in trust for the benefit of the people. HB1572, HD1 operationalizes that responsibility by investing in restorative practices rather than extractive commercial models.

Current research supports the ecological and climate benefits of restorative aquaculture. Studies show that aquaculture can improve water quality through nutrient uptake, increase habitat complexity, and contribute to localized carbon sequestration and climate mitigation. Seaweeds are primary producers that form the base of marine food webs, meaning their restoration supports broader ecosystem resilience and food security.

Restorative aquaculture supports cultural continuity and Indigenous stewardship practices. Traditional systems such as loko i‘a and limu cultivation are place-based practices that reflect the long-standing relationships between people, land, and sea. Revitalizing Indigenous aquaculture systems strengthens community well-being, food sovereignty, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. This bill creates a framework that allows these practices to be supported within modern governance structures.

In order to realize the environmental, cultural, and social benefits of restorative aquaculture, the State must invest intentionally in appropriate programs and infrastructure. HB1572, HD1 represents a thoughtful and legally sound approach to doing so, while honoring Native Hawaiian relationships to ‘āina and kai.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to support and **pass HB1572, HD1**.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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.

HB-1572-HD-1
Submitted on: 2/13/2026 9:02:02 PM
Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 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

1572 HB RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT.

HB-1572-HD-1
Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:35:26 AM
Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!