

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

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

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FIRST DEPUTY

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
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FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

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

Before the House Committee on  
FINANCE

Tuesday, February 3, 2026  
2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 1572, HOUSE DRAFT 2  
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

House Bill 1572, House Draft 2 proposes to require the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to: (1) Establish a 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) supports 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 stands ready to consult with DAB as it establishes and implements the restorative aquaculture development program and pilot demonstration sites and pursues federal grant funding.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i  
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**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**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026  
2:00 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 308**

**HOUSE BILL NO.1572, HD2  
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No.1572, HD2. The bill requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) 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 DAB supports this measure.

HB1572 HD2 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 HD2 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 the 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 the 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's 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 HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Finance  
Tuesday, March 3, 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 Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB1572 HD2 – RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT.

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

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) supports with comments HB1572 HD2 relating to aquaculture development.

Aquaculture development is a vital step in improving Hawai'i 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 Hawai'i'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 Hawai'i.

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 Hawai'i 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.



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March 3, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1572, HD2**  
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

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 provides comments on HB 1572, HD2.**

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 recognize the measure's intent to invest in infrastructure, workforce development, permit streamlining, pilot demonstration sites, and federal grant competitiveness. Reducing processing times and expanding shared infrastructure would benefit producers statewide and help strengthen Hawai'i's position in emerging blue economy sectors.

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.



Testimony Before The  
House Committee on Finance (FIN)  
**COMMENTS ON HB1572 HD2**

March 3, 2026, 2:00 p.m., Room 308 & Via Zoom

We are Olan Leimomi Fisher and Brenda Asuncion Lima, Kua'āina Advocate and Hui Mālama Loko I'a Coordinator, respectively, testifying on behalf of [Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo \(or KUA\)](#). "Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo" stands for "grassroots growing through shared responsibility," and our acronym "KUA" means "backbone." **Our mission is to connect and empower communities to improve their quality of life through the collective care for their biocultural (natural and cultural) heritage, serving as a "backbone organization" that supports creative and community-driven solutions to problems stemming from environmental degradation.** Hawai'i's biocultural resources continue to be negatively impacted by political, economic, and social changes, and the increasing dangers of climate change make fostering and empowering resilient communities acutely critical.

Currently KUA supports three major networks of: (1) almost 40 mālama 'āina (caring for our 'āina or "that which feeds") community groups collectively referred to as E Alu Pū (moving forward together); (2) over 60 loko i'a (fishpond aquaculture systems unique to Hawai'i) and wai 'ōpae (anchialine pool systems) sites in varying stages of restoration and development, with numerous caretakers, stakeholders, and volunteers known as the Hui Mālama Loko I'a ("caretakers of fishponds"); and (3) the Limu Hui made up of over 50 loea (traditional experts) and practitioners in all things "limu" or locally-grown "seaweed." **Our shared vision is to once again experience what our kūpuna (ancestors) referred to as 'ĀINA MOMONA – abundant and healthy ecological systems that sustain our community resilience and well-being.**

**KUA provides our comments on HB1572 HD2 regarding its potential effects on 'āina momona.**

HB1572 HD2 seeks to require the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to temporarily establish a restorative aquaculture development program to reduce permit processing time, build infrastructure, increase education, pursue federal grants, establish three pilot demonstration sites for restorative aquaculture, and convene a restorative aquaculture advisory council. We appreciate Representative Perruso for flagging this measure for us, as KUA was not a part of its creation or introduction. Although we acknowledge the apparent intention of HB1572 HD2 to expand sustainable aquaculture in Hawai'i, to our knowledge the drafters behind this measure did not engage with any of our KUA network members, many of which are heavily involved with nearshore fisheries management and other aquaculture activities across Hawai'i. Those advocating for a measure that professes to be prioritizing "Native Hawaiian systems, including loko i'a, indigenous limu varieties, and endemic Native Hawaiian aquatic species," as well as "Equitable participation and benefit-sharing with practitioners engaged in Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices, small-scale producers, and underrepresented communities," should at the very least try to engage and collaborate directly with the leading communities and practitioners in these areas.

Furthermore, KUA's coordinators and network participants in all three of our networks have built stronger connections to the Department of Land and Natural Resources - Division of Aquatic Resources (DLNR-DAR) and the aquaculture community, knowing very well that to reach a vision of greater food self-sufficiency we need to transform our culture, values, and institutions together. We acknowledge the existing resources and technical capacity within DLNR-DAR's existing restorative aquaculture programs and encourage further support to build towards that vision of 'āina momona already in place - increasing Hawaiian fish for Hawaiian waters and food system infrastructure. As such, placement of this program within DAB adds another layer of uncertainty with potential competition or confusion with existing DLNR-DAR efforts.

As we look to the future, our communities are raising the kupa'āina who want to have jobs focused on mālama 'āina. The recent increased capacity of the DOCARE Academy enrollment is one example, and greater aquacultural capacity and economy are also possible pathways for our young people to flourish. However, this also needs to be guided and led by the Native Hawaiian and local practitioners themselves, which we do not see how HB1572 HD2 has been prioritizing to date. With that said, we appreciate creative and collaborative approaches that build the capacity and skills of the next generation with intention, and in a way that benefits ongoing community efforts such as loko i'a as a catalyst for ecosystem regeneration. We also encourage greater dialogue on this measure with our KUA networks.

The communities we work with are committed to ensuring the long-term health of our biocultural resources that they have cared for and depended on for generations since time immemorial. **We believe protecting our environment, the foundation of our very existence, is about long-term investment and a vision of 'āina momona.** To get there it requires taking the steps necessary for greater self-sufficiency, development of a pipeline of new and more innovative career pathways, mindsets, relationships, and resources for mālama 'āina efforts.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify. Please consider our **comments** of concern regarding HB1572 HD2, and let us know any questions.

**Aloha 'Āina Momona no nā kau ā kau.**

February 2026

To: Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi and the House Committee on Finance.

Subject: **HB1572 HD2**, Relating to Aquaculture Development

Aloha,

As amended, HB1572 HD2 establishes a four-year Restorative Aquaculture Development Program that supports aquaculture growth through the creation of jobs, environmental protections and economic support. The amendments strengthened the bill by advancing Hawai'i's food security, environmental restoration, and economic development goals. It also defines program goals, requires a multi-sector advisory council and annual reporting to the Legislature. These additions ensure that any state investment is measurable and transparent.

This bill positions Hawai'i to multiply state dollars rather than rely on them alone. Supporting this program will allow the State to compete for millions in federal grants, reduce permitting delays and grow a local seafood sector that currently depends heavily on imports. Increases in local production keep more food dollars circulating within Hawai'i, support job creation, and strengthen food security during supply chain disruptions.

Restorative aquaculture species such as seaweed and shellfish naturally improve water quality, support habitat diversity, native species, carbon sequestration and provide shoreline protection. These services provided by healthy ecosystems would otherwise require expensive engineered infrastructure or environmental remediation. With a four-year timeline, sunset provisions and annual reporting, this program is a time-bound and accountable investment designed to generate measurable environmental and economic returns.

HB1572 HD2 represents a thoughtful, accountable, and progressive investment in ecological restoration, workforce development, and long-term economic resilience.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to support and **pass HB1572 HD2**.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Mahalo,

Carlin McFadden & the Food+ Policy Team

#fixourfoodsystem

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**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-2**

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 6:58:46 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!!

**HB-1572-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 7:11:38 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Paul Bernstein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Todd and members of the FIN committee:**

**I'm writing in support of HB1572 HD2** to protect natural and cultural resources for present and future generations.

Mahalo nui,

Paul Bernstein

Honolulu

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Kaipō Kekona  
State President



Christian Zuckerman  
Vice-President

Maureen Datta  
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Kelii Gannet  
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Maureen Datta  
Kona, Hawai'i

Gina Lind  
Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer  
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros  
Mauna Kahālāwai,  
Maui

Kaipō Kekona  
Lahaina, Maui

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Waimānalo, O'ahu

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 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 Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union