

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 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

**THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1603, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES**

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1603, House Draft 1. This bill repeals the requirement for land covered by an agricultural park lease with a remaining term of 15 years or less to be located in a county having a population of less than 500,000 in order for the Department to extend the lease. The Department respectfully offers comments.

In the 2023 Session, the legislature passed House Bill 307, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 1, Conference Draft 1, which was signed into law as Act 213 on July 5, 2023. Act 213 allows the Department to extend agricultural park leases with remaining terms of fifteen years or less in any county with a population of 500,000 or less, provided the lease area is 25 acres or less. In effect, Act 213 authorizes lease extensions in all agricultural parks managed by the Department with the exception of those located on Oahu. House Bill 1603 appears to be intended to remove Act 213's restriction on the extension of Oahu agricultural park leases.

Existing agricultural park lessees generally advocate for the Department to be given broad authority to grant lease extensions. Such extensions allow them to make long-term plans for continued operations with new investments in their leasehold improvements and facilities. At the same time, persons on the Department's waitlist for agricultural lands would likely prefer that upon the expiration of existing lease terms, State lands be made available for lease to qualified farmers through a competitive process. The Department recognizes merit in both positions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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

March 3, 2026

Aloha e Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

Re: Testimony in Support of HB1603 HD1, Relating To Agricultural Park Leases

Please accept this testimony in **strong support of HB1603 HD1. This bill would bring consistency to ag park leases throughout the islands** and is a first step in broader efforts to update, streamline and improve affordable access to agricultural land, water and infrastructure. Currently, there is a population threshold which means different lease terms apply on different islands.

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. In our work across counties, we regularly see how inconsistent lease structures create legal uncertainty and inhibit long-term planning for producers.

Current statute creates differing agricultural park lease terms based on population thresholds, resulting in unequal treatment of similarly situated farmers depending solely on the island on which they operate. **HB1603 HD1 corrects this disparity by aligning lease term eligibility statewide, ensuring more uniform application of the law.**

Clear, consistent lease policies strengthen transparency, reduce administrative ambiguity, and promote equitable access to state agricultural resources. When lease terms are predictable and applied uniformly, farmers are better positioned to comply with contractual obligations, secure financing, and invest in improvements that enhance land stewardship and productivity. In turn, this supports the State's interest in ensuring responsible management of public trust resources. By enabling O'ahu farmers to apply for extended lease terms, the bill provides more options for meaningful investment in soil health, water management, and responsible stewardship.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Warm wishes,

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

March 5, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY ON HB 1603, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES

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 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 strongly supports HB 1603, HD1, which addresses one of the most significant barriers to agricultural productivity on state lands: lease term uncertainty for farmers operating in agricultural parks.

Agricultural parks can and should support new and beginning farmers, but they must also support existing farmers with a proven track record of production. These farmers are currently producing Hawai'i's food, feed, fiber, fuel, and floriculture, and many have made substantial investments in their Ag Park operations. Farmers with short remaining lease terms may be discouraged from continued investment, restricted from accessing financing, and placed at risk of closure.

Lease certainty is essential for agricultural viability. Lenders routinely consider the remaining lease term when evaluating loan applications, and farmers with limited lease horizons are often unable to secure financing for their farm operations. By allowing lease extensions, HB 1603, HD1 encourages long-term planning, investment, and increased agricultural production on state lands.

While concerns are sometimes raised about waitlists for agricultural park leases, HFB believes the long-term solution is to increase the supply of agricultural park parcels rather than displacing productive, established farmers. Expanding agricultural park capacity by acquiring suitable private agricultural land and developing new or expanded parks, similar to the Kunia Agricultural Park, would create more opportunities for new and beginning farmers while preserving existing production. HB 1603, HD1 supports this balanced

approach by maintaining agricultural productivity today while allowing the State to pursue strategies that expand access to agricultural lands over time.

HFB also emphasizes that lease extensions under HB 1603, HD1 are discretionary, not automatic. The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity retains the authority to approve or deny extensions and to enforce lease terms to ensure bona fide agricultural use. This approach balances accountability with the need to support productive farming operations.

HFB respectfully suggests a modest amendment to expand eligibility from agricultural leases of twenty-five acres or less to thirty-five acres or less. Many family farming operations in Hawai'i operate within this range and face the same challenges related to financing, infrastructure investment, and long-term planning that this bill seeks to address. Expanding the acreage threshold would better reflect agricultural realities while remaining consistent with the bill's intent to support bona fide farmers.

HB 1603, HD1 represents a practical policy solution that encourages investment, protects existing agricultural production, and supports the State's goals of increasing local food production and strengthening food security. HFB respectfully urges your support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1603-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 7:10:50 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Blazak	Hilo County Farm Bureau	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee,

Hilo County Farm Bureau supports HB 1603, HD1, which allows lease extensions for farmers operating in State agricultural parks on O'ahu. Under existing law, lease extensions are limited to counties with populations under 500,000. This means farmers operating in State agricultural parks on O'ahu are excluded from the same lease extension opportunities already available to farmers on the neighbor islands. HB 1603, HD1 removes that population restriction so farmers across the state are treated equally.

Lease certainty is critical for farmers. When leases are nearing expiration, it becomes difficult to invest in infrastructure, plant long-term crops, or secure financing. This measure will provide the stability farmers need to plan, invest, and continue producing food. Allowing lease extensions statewide will directly support existing agricultural operations in State agricultural parks and helps maintain local agricultural production across Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Megan Blazak
Chapter President
Hilo County Farm Bureau



Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair

Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

HB1603 HD1

RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES

March 5, 2026, 2:00 PM

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

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

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB1603 HD1** which addresses one of the most significant barriers to agricultural productivity on state lands: lease term uncertainty for farmers operating in agricultural parks.

Currently, lease extensions are effectively limited to counties with populations under 500,000. This excludes leaseholders on Oahu from the same lease extension opportunities already available to farmers on the neighbor islands. HB 1603, HD1 removes that population restriction so farmers across the state are treated equally.

Long-term leases and confidence in tenure allows for planning, investment in infrastructure, and securing financing. Agricultural work needs the ability to extend leases when they are nearing expiration to continue to produce food. Providing this option statewide supports existing agricultural operations and helps maintain local agricultural production across Hawai'i.

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





EAST OAHU COUNTY FARM BUREAU

910 CALIFORNIA AVE., WAHIAWA, HI 96786

March 4, 2026

Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair, and Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol, 415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

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

The East O'ahu County Farm Bureau, which represents approximately 420 farmers and supporters of agriculture from Waimanalo to Kahuku, **strongly supports HB 1603 HD1**, "Relating to Agricultural Park Leases," which would allow O'ahu farmers to extend agricultural park leases with a remaining term of 15 years or less.

O'ahu has many small to medium-sized farms, including ones in State agricultural parks. To remain productive, especially in this time of technological change, farms need frequent investment in infrastructure and equipment. If farmers aren't sure that their farms will continue, they will be discouraged from making the necessary long-term investments. We therefore urge your Committee to pass HB 1603 HD1. We further suggest that the 25-acre limit be increased to 35 acres so that more medium-scale farmers can access the bill's benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter of great importance to Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

Frederick M. Mencher
for Grant Hamachi, President
East O'ahu County Farm Bureau

HB-1603-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 12:00:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Warren Watanabe	Maui County Farm Bureau	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Maui County Farm Bureau supports HB1603 HD1, Relating to Agricultural Park Leases.



AHIKI ACRES

March 4, 2026

Re: HB1603, Relating To Agricultural Park Leases

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Haley McKinnon, and I am writing on behalf of Ahiki Acres, LLC **in strong support of House Bill 1603**. This bill repeals the requirement that land covered by an agricultural park lease with a remaining term of fifteen years or less must be located in a county having a population of fewer than five hundred thousand in order for the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to extend the lease.

Ahiki Acres is a small, diversified vegetable farm located in Waimānalo, Hawai'i. Since 2019, we have worked to build a viable farm business that provides fresh, locally grown food for our community while stewarding the land we farm.

Access to stable, long-term agricultural leases is one of the most important factors determining whether farmers in Hawai'i can succeed. Policies that limit lease extensions based on county population create unnecessary barriers for farmers on O'ahu and restrict fair access to land that is intended for agricultural use. Removing this restriction helps ensure that farmers across the state are treated equitably under the law.

For farmers like us, the ability to extend a lease is not simply a business matter. It directly affects our ability to care for the land responsibly, invest in soil health and conservation practices, and continue contributing to Hawai'i's local food system. Without secure tenure, farmers are discouraged from making the long-term improvements that benefit both the land and the broader community.

Agricultural lands in Hawai'i are a precious public resource. Ensuring that these lands remain actively farmed and responsibly stewarded is in the public interest. Providing fair and consistent lease policies helps strengthen local food production while supporting farmers who are committed to caring for the 'āina.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Haley Kaukea Eiko McKinnon
Co-Owner
Ahiki Acres, LLC



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026**

**COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair**

**Thursday, March 5, 2026 2:00 PM
Conference Room 325
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street**

RE: HB1603 HD1 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES

My name is Eric S. Tanouye and I am the President for the Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association. HFNA is a statewide umbrella organization with approximately 350 members. Our membership is made up with breeders, hybridizers, propagators, growers, shippers, wholesalers, retailers, educators, and the allied industry, which supports our efforts in agriculture.

The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) **SUPPORTS House Bill 1603 HD1** which repeals the requirement for land covered by an agricultural park lease with a remaining term of fifteen years or less to be located in a county having a population of less than five hundred thousand in order for the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

We want to see our growers and producers of our industry receive help and have future growers have the ability to enter the industry as a viable business option. We are currently experiencing an “aging farmer” problem and we need to plan to help new growers and farmers enter agriculture.

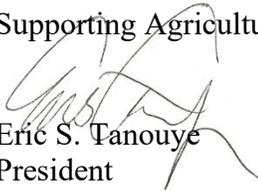
We are requesting an increase to the cap of 25 acres to up to 60 acres. We understand that there are leases that are larger than 25 acres and we feel if we want to really assist our farmers, ranchers, and nurserymen and women, increasing the limit up to 60 acres would include lots that may need lease extensions.

We ask that you support our industry and agriculture, so that we may continue to bring the beauty of Hawaii to others through flowers and ornamentals.



If you have any questions at this time, I would be happy to discuss them and can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 ext 2627, cell 960-1433 and email eric@greenpointnursery.com.

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,



Eric S. Tanouye
President

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association



PO Box 42
Waimanalo, HI 96795-0042
<http://waimanaloag.com>

Waimanalo Agricultural Association

March 5, 2026

**Testimony in Support of HB 1603
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES**

House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.
Via Video Conference and CR 325

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and Committee Members,

The Waimanalo Agricultural Association (WAA) is writing in **strong support of HB 1603, HD1 Relating to Agricultural Park Leases**. WAA was originally formed in 1995 to address agricultural theft in Waimanalo and has since grown to represent agribusiness in Waimanalo, including plant nurseries, flower and turfgrass farms, growers of fruit and vegetables, equestrian ranches, and distributors of agricultural supplies. WAA is dedicated to the preservation and perpetuation of agriculture in Waimanalo.

HB 1603, HD1 proposes allowing a lessee of an existing agricultural park lease the ability to extend their leases if they have fifteen years or less remaining. This bill will bring parity to what was extended to the neighbor island agricultural park leases in 2023 under Act 213. In the Committee Report for Act 213 (2023) by the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment it said,

Your committee finds that agricultural park leases are structured to advance agriculture in the State and that long-term leases make it possible for farmers and ranchers to prudently invest in operational and infrastructure improvements on leased lands. **Your Committee further finds that when faced with the uncertainty of continued tenancy, lessees have little incentive to make major investments or improvements to their infrastructure or ensure the long-term maintenance of their facilities, which may deteriorate as a result.** Thus, this measure allows the Department of Agriculture to extend certain leases with a remaining term of fifteen years or less to encourage further investment and production on agricultural park lands. *Emphasis added.* [S. Comm. on Agriculture and Environment, HB 307, HD1, 32nd Leg., \(Haw. 2023\)](#)

Waimanalo is one of the most close-knit agricultural communities that continues to thrive and contribute to the agricultural diversity of the State's economy. The passage of this measure will bring additional long-term investment into the farmer's agricultural operations. As noted in the 2013 committee report above, a longer lease for a farmer would increase the chances of a financial institution granting an agricultural loan. This measure will have a profound impact on Oahu's agricultural parks, which make up more than 500 acres of agriculturally zoned land. The Waimanalo Agricultural Park is comprised of smaller lots for a total 126 acres and this measure.

Waimanalo Agricultural Association requests that you to pass HB 1603, HD1 to allow Oahu farmers the ability to secure a more viable future for their agricultural operations and continue to contribute to the state's economy. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support.

HB-1603-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 7:08:22 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!!

Mahalo!

HB-1603-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 7:52:16 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janet Ashman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass HB 1603, HD1.

The bill is necessary to provide farmers on O‘ahu **the same lease extension opportunities as those in other counties.**

This is only fair since farmers near the end of their leases face insurmountable uncertainties and obstacles regarding financing, infrastructure, and long-term crop planning. Farmers need earlier lease extensions to plan, invest, and continue to produce food.

Please support local food production by passing this measure. Thank you.

HB-1603-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:14:30 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randy Cabral	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support