

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



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

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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Wednesday, April 1, 2026
10:40 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 016

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

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1603, House Draft 1, Senate 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.

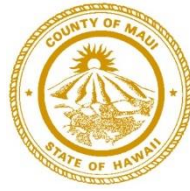
In the 2023 Session, the legislature passed House Bill 307, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 1, Conference Draft 1, which was signed into law as Act 213 on July 5, 2023. Act 213 allows the Department to extend agricultural park leases with remaining terms of fifteen years or less in any county with a population 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.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov

LATE

TO: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor
Rogerene Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: March 2, 2026

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF HB1603 HD1, RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure.

The Act 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 to extend the lease. Effective 7/1/3000.

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. HB1603 strengthens local food security by allowing the Department of Agriculture to extend agricultural park leases, giving farmers the long-term land tenure they need to invest in soil health, infrastructure, and consistent production for island communities.
2. HB1603 promotes fairness and equity for farmers by giving them lease-extension opportunities, helping family farms stay viable despite intense development pressure and rising land costs.
3. HB1603 supports economic stability in the agricultural sector by encouraging long-term, affordable leases that make it feasible for farmers to upgrade irrigation, expand operations, and maintain local jobs tied to diversified agriculture rather than short-term land speculation.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1603-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 11:57:19 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/1/2026 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Honokaupu Jr	Testifying for Ho'omakaukau	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Agriculture park? As in public parks with fruit trees? Or Mahipono? Capital needs to understand. I'm Hawaiian and vote for The Kingdom of Hawaii. I don't accept this. My Heritage, My Ancestors, My Culture, My Language. You take away from me every time you capital speak. Kupuna and Kahuna is alive and here. Not with Aloha



March 2026

To: Chair Karl Rhoads and Vice Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Subject: **HB 1603 HD1 SD1** Relating to Agricultural Park Lease Extensions

Aloha,

On behalf of Food+Policy, I am writing in support of HB1603 HD1 SD1. Long-term land access is one of the most important factors in whether farmers are able to invest in and maintain productive agricultural operations. This bill removes an unnecessary restriction that limits the ability of the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to extend agricultural park leases based solely on county population size.

The recent amendments allow for

- If a farmer has 15 years or less remaining on their lease, the state can extend it by up to 30 more years.
- The land must be 25 acres or less.
- It removes the restriction that the land must be in a less populated county (under 500,000 people).

I support this because it means more farmers across the state can qualify, not just those on neighboring islands and because it expands access to long-term lease extensions for small farmers across Hawai'i.

By removing the county population restriction, this change allows more agricultural producers—regardless of location—to benefit from increased land security. For many small-scale farmers, especially those working 25 acres or less, stability in land tenure directly impacts their ability to remain in agriculture and contribute to local food production.

However, I respectfully urge the committee to reconsider the effective date of this measure. Setting the implementation for July 1, 2050—over two decades from now—delays meaningful support for farmers who are facing these challenges today. Farms should not have to wait that long to access lease extensions that are essential for their stability and success. Advancing the effective date would better reflect the urgency of supporting Hawai'i's agricultural community and ensuring the continuity of local food production.

As a student concerned about the future of local agriculture and food systems in Hawai'i, I respectfully urge the committee to reconsider the effective date to an earlier one. Mahalo 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.



**HAWAI'I
FOOD+
POLICY**

Honolulu, HI 96813
food@purplemaia.org

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

March 30, 2026

Aloha e Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Re: Testimony in Support of HB1603 HD1 SD1, Relating to Agricultural Leases

Please accept this letter in support of **HB1603 HD1 SD1, Relating to Agricultural Leases**. 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 SD1 addresses this disparity by **aligning lease term eligibility statewide**, ensuring more consistent and equitable application of the law. Importantly, this bill **does not grant automatic lease extensions**—it allows O‘ahu farmers to *apply* to the Board of Agriculture and Biosecurity for an extension.

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 with producers statewide, we consistently hear an urgent need for more affordable and accessible agricultural land, water, and infrastructure.

Short lease terms remain a significant barrier. Farmers must make substantial investments in soil health, irrigation, and infrastructure, yet limited lease durations discourage long-term planning and stewardship. Most farmers access Department of Agriculture agricultural park leases by purchasing existing leases, often with relatively short remaining terms, after which the lease returns to public auction. Because these leases are typically awarded to the **highest bidder**, farmers may be outcompeted by those with greater financial resources, regardless of agricultural experience. At the same time, few new leases are issued annually, further limiting access. The reality is that securing agricultural land requires both access and significant upfront investment to make land productive. The assumption that agricultural park leases are a temporary stepping stone to private land does not reflect current conditions, including high land costs and increasing development pressure.

Hawai‘i’s farmers need **both expanded access to affordable land and clear, consistent lease policies**. Aligning lease term eligibility statewide will strengthen transparency, reduce inconsistency, and promote more equitable access to public agricultural resources.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

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

April 1, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

TESTIMONY ON HB 1603, HD1, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES

Conference Room 016 & Videoconference
10:40 AM

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, 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, SD1, 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, SD1 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, SD1 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, SD1 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 remove the twenty-five-acre eligibility threshold. Many agricultural park tenants operate on parcels larger than twenty-five acres and face the same financing, infrastructure investment, and long-term planning challenges that this bill seeks to address. Limiting eligibility to parcels of twenty-five acres or less would unintentionally exclude the majority of agricultural park tenants, estimated to be nearly ninety percent of existing leases, from the very relief this measure is intended to provide. Allowing all agricultural park leases to be eligible for extension, while maintaining the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity's discretion to approve or deny extensions based on compliance and bona fide agricultural use, would create a more equitable policy and better support the productive farmers currently operating in Hawai'i's agricultural parks.

HB 1603, HD1, SD1 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.



**THE SENATE
KA 'AHA KENEKOA
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026**

**COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair**

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 10:40 AM

**Conference Room 016 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street**

RE: HB1603 HD1 SD1 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) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS House Bill 1603 HD1 SD1** 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 these 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

April 1, 2026

**Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1603, HD1, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES**

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 10:40 AM
Via Video Conference and CR 016

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Committee Members,

The Waimanalo Agricultural Association (WA`A) is writing in **strong support of HB 1603, HD1, SD1, Relating to Agricultural Park Leases**. WA`A was originally formed in 1995 to address agricultural theft in Waimanalo and has since grown to represent the interests of agribusiness in Waimanalo, including plant nurseries, flower and turfgrass farms, growers of fruit and vegetables, equestrian ranches, and distributors of agricultural supplies. WA`A is dedicated to the preservation and perpetuation of agriculture in Waimanalo.

HB 1603, HD1, SD1 proposes to allow lessees with an existing agricultural park lease the ability to extend their leases if they have fifteen years or less remaining. The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity would have the discretion to allow an extension or not. The ability to do such is already allowed in every other county in the State, Honolulu is the only county that does not allow such a lease extension. This bill will bring parity to what has been extended to neighbor island agricultural park leases in 2023 under Act 213. In the Committee Report by the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment for Act 213 (2023) it said,

[y]our 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 to a farmer's agricultural operations. As noted in the 2023 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 agricultural zoned lands. The Waimanalo Agricultural Park is comprised of smaller lots for a total 126 acres and this measure.

Waimanalo Agricultural Association requests that you pass HB 1603, HD1, SD1 which would 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.



AHIKI ACRES

April 1, 2026

Re: HB1603, HD1, SD1 Relating To Agricultural Park Leases

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Haley McKinnon, and I am a farmer and co-owner of Ahiki Acres, a small diversified farm in Waimānalo. I write in strong support of HB1603.

Long-term land security is essential for farms like ours to invest in soil health, infrastructure, and consistent food production. These are not short-term efforts, and without stability, it becomes difficult to plan, grow, and contribute meaningfully to Hawai'i's local food system.

The current population-based restriction prevents farmers in counties like ours from even being considered for lease extensions, regardless of our stewardship or productivity. This creates an inequitable system where farmers are treated differently based solely on geography.

HB1603 does not guarantee lease extensions. It simply allows farmers in all counties to be considered under the same process. Any extension must still be reviewed and approved by the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, ensuring that only farmers in good standing are eligible.

I also want to respectfully address concerns about access for new farmers. In practice, access to state agricultural lands is not always determined by farming experience or readiness, but often by financial capacity. Supporting existing farmers who are actively producing food and stewarding the land should be seen as complementary to and not in conflict with creating opportunities for new farmers.

At a time when Hawai'i is working to strengthen food security, this bill is a practical step toward a more fair and functional system.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Haley Kaukea Eiko McKinnon
Co-Owner of Ahiki Acres, LLC

Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Christian Zuckerman
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Chapter Presidents

Kelii Gannet
Kohala, Hawai'i

East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Ka'ū, Hawai'i

Maureen Datta
Kona, Hawai'i

Gina Lind
Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahālāwai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

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Negus Manna
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India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Rachel LaDrig
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i



LATE

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Judiciary 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 HB1603.**

HB1603 offers equitable conditions for farmers across Hawaii by enabling lease extensions for agricultural park lands, irrespective of the population of the county where the land is located. This is particularly important in larger, more populated counties where farmers face significant competition for land resources. By removing the population-based restriction, HB1603 ensures that farmers in all regions have the same ability to secure long-term access to agricultural lands, fostering stability and promoting agricultural sustainability across the state.

When farmers have the assurance of long-term land tenure, they are incentivized to invest in sustainable practices and infrastructure improvements that enhance productivity while preserving environmental quality. This bill not only supports the economic viability of individual farming operations but also contributes to the overall resilience and competitiveness of Hawaii's agricultural community. The enactment of HB1603 would provide farmers the confidence to make decisions that benefit their businesses, local communities, and the state's agricultural future.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



LATE

April 1, 2026

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Support for HB 1603, HD1, SD1, RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES. (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 to extend the lease. Effective 7/1/2050. [SD1]).

**Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 10:40 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 016, & Via Videoconference**

The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawai'i (LURF) is a private research and trade association founded in 1979, whose members include major Hawai'i landowners, developers, utility companies, and land use professionals. LURF's mission is to research, educate, and advocate for reasonable, rational, and equitable land use planning, laws, and regulations that encourage well-planned and sustainable economic growth in agriculture, housing, renewable energy, commercial and industrial uses, and tourism, while safeguarding Hawai'i's significant natural, environmental, historic, and cultural resources, public health, and safety.

For over the past century, LURF members have been strong supporters of agriculture, have led the state in agricultural lands and production, and over the past decade, have partnered with the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation and her agricultural stakeholders to advocate for, and pass numerous laws that support viable agriculture, biosecurity, and sustainable food security in Hawai'i.

LURF supports HB 1603, HD1, SD1, which repeals the requirement that restricts the extension of agricultural park leases in the City and County of Honolulu.

The current law allows the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (AB) to extend agricultural park leases with a remaining term of fifteen years or less if located in any county having a population of less than five hundred thousand (allowed on all Neighbor Islands, but excludes Oahu).

Longterm leases are is critical for agricultural viability because the remaining terms of the leases determine farmers' decisions relating to investments in agricultural infrastructure, equipment, and financing for farm operations.

HB 1603, HD1, SD1, will repeal the restriction on lease extensions for Oahu, and LURF believes that this measure will allow the DAB to more equitably and consistently manage agricultural park leases statewide; better support the long-term viability of agricultural park operations; and hopefully strengthen Hawai'i's food security by increasing local food production in state agricultural parks.

Based on the reasons stated above, LURF is in **support of HB 1603, HD1, SD1,** and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of this proposed measure.

HB-1603-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 3:07:30 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/1/2026 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support w/comment

PROVIDE IT IS AN ACTIVE FOOD PRODUCTION FARM LANDS.

1603 HB RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PARK LEASES.