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March 16, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

TESTIMONY ON HB 1605, HD1
RELATING TO HUMAN AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice-Chair Kidani, 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 supports HB 1605, HD1, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) for the development of its Human and Community Resilience Institute.

HFB has a long history of working closely with CTAHR on research, extension, and youth development efforts that directly support Hawai'i's farmers, ranchers, and agricultural communities. Programs such as 4-H youth development, nutrition education, and community-based extension play an important role in building a future agricultural workforce, strengthening demand for local agricultural products, and improving community understanding of agriculture.

HB 1605, HD1 seeks to consolidate and strengthen existing CTAHR programs under a coordinated, data-driven framework. HFB understands that recent federal funding changes have reduced CTAHR's capacity in food and nutrition education, and this measure provides an opportunity to stabilize and better align programs that support families, youth, and agricultural communities across the State.

From an agricultural perspective, efforts that improve food and nutrition education, support youth engagement through 4-H, and provide better data and evaluation can complement broader goals to strengthen Hawai'i's food system and agricultural economy. HFB appreciates that this measure focuses on coordination, education, and capacity-building rather than regulation or mandates for farmers and ranchers.

HFB recognizes CTAHR as a critical partner in Hawai'i's agricultural ecosystem and supports HB 1605, HD1 as an investment in education, extension, and community-based programs that ultimately benefit agriculture statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education
Monday, March 16, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience

and

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1605 HD1 – RELATING TO HUMAN AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1605 HD1. This measure provides the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) with resources for the development of its Human and Community Resilience Institute (HCRI).

Food security and healthy diets are essential for positive youth development, thriving families, and resilient communities. Helping local families become food and nutritionally secure is one of CTAHR's core missions, but the end of the SNAP Ed program by the federal government has led to the loss of 13 food educators at the college. The loss of these trusted community partners will accelerate the already urgent need that more than 30% of Hawai'i households are food insecure.

The proposed new HCRI will be a community-based and data-driven, uniting our centers and programs with a shared purpose: to increase children's food and nutritional security, increase positive youth development and health outcomes, increase family well-being, foster food and farming entrepreneurship, develop new graduate degrees, and increase community resilience.

HCRI will partner with community organizations and government agencies and leverage the network of CTAHR's Centers for Applied Research and Extension Services (CARES) statewide to build sustainable solutions to food and nutritional insecurity challenges in Hawai'i. The appropriation in HB 1605 HD1 will support statewide community assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Christian Zuckerman
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
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Chapter Presidents

Kelii Gannet
Kohala, Hawai'i

East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Ka'ū, Hawai'i

Maureen Datta
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Gina Lind
Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahālāwai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Kilia Avelino-Purdy
Moloka'i

Negus Manna
Lāna'i

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 Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Senate Education 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 HB1605.**

HB1605 recognizes the pressing need to fortify Hawaii's resilience against the escalating challenges posed by climate change, economic fluctuations, and social dynamics. The proposed investment in the University of Hawaii at Manoa's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience represents a foundational enhancement of our community's adaptive capacities. By channeling resources into the development of a dedicated institute, HB1605 ensures a concentrated effort toward research and education aimed at fostering robust human and community resilience across our islands.

For Hawaii's farmers, the impacts of climate change are not merely theoretical; they constitute daily challenges that require immediate and innovative responses. By focusing on resilience, HB1605 promises to empower local farmers with the knowledge and tools necessary to adapt to environmental changes, thereby safeguarding Hawaii's agricultural heritage and food security. The integration of advanced research and community outreach can foster more resilient agricultural systems that are better equipped to withstand environmental stressors and contribute to a healthier ecosystem.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union

HB-1605-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 12:48:50 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennine Sullivan	Testifying for Feeding Hawaii Together	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Jennine Sullivan and I serve as the Executive Director of Feeding Hawai‘i Together, which operates The Pantry, Hawai‘i’s only year round e commerce food distribution program serving families across O‘ahu.

I am writing in strong support of HB 1605, HD1.

The University of Hawai‘i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience is one of our most important partners. Our organizations work closely together to support ‘āina based learning, food systems education, and community engagement that strengthens the wellbeing of families across Hawai‘i.

Every Tuesday, volunteers from The Pantry travel to the Urban Garden Center to volunteer alongside the CTAHR team. They help plant, weed, harvest, and build infrastructure to support the garden’s work. Volunteers then bring the harvested produce back to The Pantry, where it is distributed to families in our community. This partnership allows us to connect agriculture, education, and food access in a very practical and meaningful way.

In 2025 alone, The Pantry served over 14,000 unduplicated individuals across O‘ahu and distributed more than 2.2 million pounds of food, with nearly seventy percent consisting of fresh produce, dairy, eggs, bread, and frozen proteins. Partnerships with institutions like CTAHR help ensure that food access, nutrition, and education remain connected to Hawai‘i’s land, culture, and local food systems.

Investments that strengthen CTAHR’s ability to partner with community organizations like ours directly benefit the families we serve and help build stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities across our state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

With gratitude,
Jennine Sullivan
Executive Director
Feeding Hawai‘i Together

HB-1605-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 12:55:42 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Honorable Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Hilo County Farm Bureau members, our chapter urges the committee to pass HB1605 HD1. The University of Hawai‘i at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience provides vital research, extension, and education services to agricultural producers and beginning farmers across the state. The proposed measure will enhance UH CTAHR's capabilities to continue its critical work to support the current and future farmers of Hawai‘i.

Thank you,

Megan Blazak
Chapter President
Hilo County Farm Bureau



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

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 16, 2026 1:00pm
Conference Room 229
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street**

RE: HB1605HD1 RELATING TO HUMAN AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

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 1605** HD1 which Appropriates funds to the University of Hawaii at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience for the development of its human and community resilience institute.

The University of Hawaii at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience has been a valuable partner to HFNA and our industry for many years. They have supported our industry in critical times helping to develop pest and disease management and control tools. They have helped with a breeding program that has allowed our floriculture industry to compete on a global level. Finally, the education and support of CTAHR extension agents are a valuable resource to our growers and producers.

This investment into CTAHR is also an investment into agriculture, our community and to Hawai'i. A strong family, leads to a strong community, which leads to strong State.

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



March 14, 2026

To: Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Senator Michelle Kidani, and the Members of the Senate Committee on Education

Subject: **HB1605 HD1**, Relating to Human and Community Resilience

Aloha,

I am writing in **support** of **HB1605 HD1**, which appropriates funds to the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) for the development of its Human and Community Resilience Institute.

Resilience is defined as the ability to withstand and adapt in the face of challenges. As exhibited during the pandemic and recent cuts to food assistance programs, any disruptions to our food system can easily devastate local families and communities. 1-in-3 households in Hawai'i experience food insecurity, meaning that they do not have access to enough food to ensure a healthy, active lifestyle¹. In addition, a lack of adequate access to nutritious food and unhealthy eating habits are leading causes of diet-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, kidney and heart disease, and cancer². **In order to foster family and community resilience, we need more community food system leaders, which begins with education and outreach.**

I urge this committee to pass HB1605 HD1, which will support the education of our future community food system leaders by encouraging healthy eating habits and reconnecting them to their food system.

Mahalo,
Sydney Haas & 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.

¹[The State of Food Insecurity in Hawai'i \(2024-2025\)](#)

²[Hawai'i Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan 2030](#)

Date: March 16, 2026

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: House Bill 1605 HD1, Relating to Human and Community Resilience

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

ECAS supports House Bill 1605 HD1 which would appropriate funds to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience for the development of its human and community resilience institute.

Recent changes to federal policy and funding streams have threatened our local social safety net and will put further stress on a local population that already suffers from a housing crisis, food insecurity, and a quickly rising cost of living.

However, the College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resilience is uniquely positioned to help address the needs of our local community. The specific programs that would form this new institute are experts in these matters with long track records of collaboration with both government agencies and community organizations. Moreover, they have proven their ability to identify and address the needs of our community's most vulnerable members.

This measure, which would direct resources to stand up a dedicated institute, will have outsized impact on our community's overall resilience.

For this reason, ECAS supports House Bill 1605 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

HB-1605-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 1:58:45 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Phillipson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Am in support of this bill. Keep it moving along.

Thanks,

Mark Phillipson

HB-1605-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2026 11:13:30 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara G Moore	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1605, HD1.

HB 1605 supports the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) by strengthening coordination of existing programs that support agriculture, youth development, and community education. My family has been in 4-H for 12 years and I have seen youth grow and mature in their abilities and confidence to lead our industry forward.

HB 1605, HD1, focuses on education, coordination, and capacity-building, not on the regulation of farmers. Supporting CTAHR is an investment in agriculture and our communities.

Mahalo

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



EAST OAHU COUNTY FARM BUREAU
910 CALIFORNIA AVE., WAHIAWA, HI 96786

March 14, 2026

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair, and Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education
State Capitol, 415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, 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 1605 HD1**, "Relating to Human and Community Resilience," which would provide funding for CTAHR's proposed Human and Community Resilience Institute.

CTAHR's continuing research, education, and extension activities are essential to Hawai'i's agricultural production. HB 1605 HD1 supports CTAHR by strengthening coordination of existing programs that support agriculture, youth development, and community education.

Efforts that improve food and nutrition education, youth engagement, and data coordination also help strengthen demand for local agricultural products. We therefore hope you will support Hawai'i's agricultural community by passing HB 1605 HD1.

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-1605-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 9:17:27 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. John Souza, Jr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Committee on Finance
Hearing on HB1605 HD1
RELATING TO HUMAN AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write in strong support of HB1605 HD1.

This measure reflects an important understanding of Hawai‘i’s needs: food security, youth development, family well-being, and community resilience are deeply connected. HB1605 HD1 would support the development of the Human and Community Resilience Institute within the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience, as well as key staff positions to strengthen community-based programming, data capacity, nutrition education, and evaluation.

I especially appreciate that this bill recognizes resilience as more than an agricultural or economic issue alone. In Hawai‘i, resilience is also relational. It lives in families, caregiving systems, youth supports, and communities' capacity to adapt under stress. The bill’s stated vision of bringing together programs focused on children, families, nutrition, and community outcomes seems well aligned with that broader reality.

As the State continues to invest in human and community resilience, I also hope policymakers will keep in mind the importance of graduate workforce pathways that prepare professionals to support couples, families, and communities through relationally focused behavioral health services. Strengthening food systems and strengthening family systems are not competing priorities. In practice, they often intersect in the everyday lives of the people we serve.

For that reason, I respectfully support HB1605 HD1 and see it as a meaningful step toward a more integrated vision of resilience in Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Dr. John Souza, Jr., LMFT, DMFT

HB-1605-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 10:43:54 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support HB 1605, HD1, to appropriate funds to UHM CTAHR for the development of its Human and Community Resilience Institute.

Strengthening coordination of existing programs that support agriculture, youth development, and community education will help grow farmers and farming and support our communities.

Please pass this measure. Thank you.

LATE

HB-1605-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 5:44:45 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason Moniz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testifying in support of this Bill.

LATE

HB-1605-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 5:41:14 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Strong support