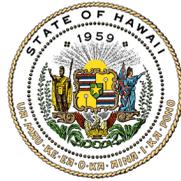


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
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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 WATER & LAND

**Tuesday, February 17, 2026
9:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 411**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1616, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1616, House Draft 1. This bill does not include a preamble specifying its intent but appears to be designed to expressly allow for the care and production of swine and swine products using Korean natural farming in certain agricultural parks managed by the Department regardless of whether the county approves of such use. The Department respectfully offers comments.

Section 166-3.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), already allows the Department to approve two lots in any agricultural park to be used for "the processing, marketing, and displaying of agricultural crops or commodities, which shall include any product created through value-added processes as defined by rules adopted by the board." House Bill 1616, House Draft 1, proposes to add a sentence at the end of this section to provide that the Department can allow for commercial activity on two lots of an agricultural park "regardless of whether the legislative body of the county in which the agricultural park is situated approved plans and specifications for" such commercial activity. The Department reads that language to mean that county council approval is not required for plans and specifications for any improvements to be constructed on such lots, unless prohibited by the "final plans and specifications for the agricultural park."

House Bill 1616, House Draft 1, further proposes to amend Section 166-6(a)(1), HRS, to allow the Department to issue leases for "the care and production of swine and swine products only using Korean natural farming." However, such use would only be permitted in agricultural parks containing more than 50 lots and located in a county with

a population of more than 200,000 but less than 300,000. The only location that fits the limitations set in this measure is the Department's Pahoia Agricultural Park.

The Department is aware of one organization who expressed interest in the past about leasing land in the Pahoia Agricultural Park for a piggery. The Department notes that piggeries and similar swine operations can generate odors, noises, and other nuisances far more impactful to the community than those of typical agricultural park uses, even though Korean natural farming can reduce some of these issues. Accordingly, it may be prudent to ensure that piggeries and other swine operations comply with all State and county laws and regulations designed to mitigate odors, noises, and other impacts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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Protecting Hawai'i's precious natural heritage

Date: Feb 13, 2026

To: Water and Land Committee, State House of Representative (WAL)

From: Malama O Puna, 501c3 Nonprofit

RE: Support for Bill 1616 D1 @ WAL Committee Tues. Feb. 17, 2026

Aloha Esteemed Chair Hashem and Committee Members

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 1616 D1. Our nonprofit organization has been working with the County of Hawaii for several years to find ways to mitigate and utilize feral animals as a great protein and nutritional source to combat food insecurity. Our work now focuses on setting up a mobile slaughter unit (MSU) to work in tandem with a Cut & Wrap facility that is nearly complete in the equipment needed to fully operate. We are currently working with microbiologist Dr. Michael Norris at UHM who is seeking funding for a 2nd MSU to be sited in East Hawaii. The Puna Agricultural Park would be an ideal location. The current MSU on Big Island operated by Hawaii Island Meat Cooperative is sited in West Hawaii and provides USDA approved processing. Trucking live animals over the Saddle Road and back is simply too expensive to work in the long run.

By standing up these facilities in East Hawaii, we will be able to compensate trappers of feral animals, mostly swine in East Hawaii, and assist the growing number of small farmers raising swine using Korean Natural Farming techniques. The Feasibility Study, Needs Assessment, and Cost Analysis we just completed for the County's Research and Development Office will help guide us through these endeavors which will focus on all species of livestock and feral animals; both domestically raised animals as well as wild swine, goat, and sheep which continue to do economic harm to our agricultural community. This bill will allow this program to help mitigate feral animal nuisance while turning a problem into a profit. We envision this operation being involved in workforce development and are already working with Hawaii Community College culinary program and other state and federal agencies to encourage utilization of feral meats. This legislation will assist our program as the Puna Agricultural Park is sited close to the Cut & Wrap facility we've already stood up and provide a location for the MSU.

We greatly appreciate your support of this Bill 1616 D1.

With much Aloha,

Eileen O'Hara, Executive Director



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February 17, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

TESTIMONY ON HB 1616, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 411 & Videoconference
9:00 AM

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice-Chair Morikawa, 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 the intent of HB 1616, HD1, which seeks to strengthen agricultural parks by allowing greater flexibility for agricultural production and value-added activities.

HB 1616, HD1 addresses practical challenges that have emerged in agricultural parks over time. While existing law allows limited commercial uses within agricultural parks, such as processing, marketing, displaying agricultural products, and value-added agricultural activities, those uses were often required to be identified during the initial park development process. In practice, this has limited flexibility as agricultural parks evolve and as farmers' operational needs change. This measure clarifies that the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity may approve up to two agriculture-based commercial lots within an agricultural park after initial development, unless such uses were expressly prohibited in the park's final plans. Importantly, these activities must remain agricultural in nature, be operated by agricultural park lessees in good standing, and support agricultural production. Allowing limited sales to the general public in this context can further support farm viability without converting agricultural parks into commercial zones.

HFB also recognizes the bill's narrow authorization for swine production in specific agricultural parks. Livestock production, including hog farming, is a legitimate agricultural activity, and increasing local hog production supports Hawai'i's goal of doubling local food production while strengthening supply for the Farm to School program, DOE's Regional Kitchens, and other institutional food programs. At the same time, agricultural parks are

shared environments, and it is important that livestock operations be properly sited, managed, and overseen to avoid unintended impacts on neighboring farms.

HFB believes that DAB, through its agricultural park leasing authority and the oversight of the Board of Agriculture, plays a critical role in reviewing, approving, and enforcing agricultural uses within state agricultural parks. Clear approval authority and consistent enforcement are essential safeguards to ensure that expanded agricultural activities support, rather than undermine, existing farming operations within a park.

Finally, HFB emphasizes the importance of continued coordination between the State and county planning departments. While agricultural parks are a state program under Chapter 166, alignment with county land-use requirements and ongoing communication will be important to ensure consistent and effective implementation.

HFB appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony and supports the intent of HB 1616 to allow more farming, support agricultural viability, and strengthen the functionality of agricultural parks while maintaining appropriate oversight and protection.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Date of Hearing: 17 February, 2026

To: Chair Mark J. Hashem, Vice Chair Dee Morikawa, and the House Committee on Water & Land

Subject: **HB1616 HD1**, Relating to Agriculture

Aloha,

Hawai'i Food+ Policy is writing in **support** of **HB1616 HD1**. This measure clarifies that commercial activities may take place within agricultural parks after initial development, even if not approved by the county, and allows the care and production of swine in certain agricultural parks under specific conditions.

Hawai'i imports approximately 85-90% of its food and many local producers struggle to remain financially viable when limited to selling unprocessed raw products. By allowing value-added processing, marketing, and direct sales within agricultural parks, it can help farmers to retain more value locally, reduce reliance on distributors, and strengthen local food supply chains. Such opportunities are important for small and mid-scale farmers who can significantly improve farm income and long-term viability through on-site processing and selling directly to consumers.

We do have concerns regarding the provision that allows new commercial activity within agricultural parks to be approved without county involvement. Counties play a critical role in representing local communities and understanding place-specific impacts related to land use, infrastructure, and environmental health. We continue to advocate for counties to retain a role in approval to ensure that smaller communities continue to have a meaningful voice in decisions that directly affect their lands and livelihoods. County legislative bodies are valuable in reflecting the communities' needs and concerns.

We support HB1616 HD1 and propose the above suggested amendments allowing for continued county involvement, which can preserve county involvement in decisions regarding commercial activity within agricultural parks while maintaining the goal of supporting a resilient and locally grounded agricultural system.

Mahalo,
Brandon Kinard & 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.

Testimony in Support of H.B. 1616 – Relating to Agriculture

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, Aloha, and mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 1616. My name is Robert Golden, and I reside in the Puna District on Hawai'i Island, where many of us are actively working to strengthen local agriculture, food sovereignty, and community resilience. From the perspective of a rural community leader and organizer, I see this bill as a thoughtful and necessary update to how we support working farmers in Hawai'i. At its heart, H.B. 1616 recognizes a simple but powerful reality: agriculture is not only about growing food—it is also about processing, marketing, and getting that food into the hands of the community. By clarifying that limited commercial activities, including value-added processing and public-facing agricultural ventures, can be allowed within agricultural parks even after their initial development, this bill removes barriers that have unintentionally limited the success of small farmers. In communities like Puna, farmers often operate on thin margins. They cannot survive on raw crop sales alone. They need the ability to wash, package, process, and directly sell their products. Allowing agricultural-based commercial ventures within agricultural parks supports economic viability while still preserving the core agricultural purpose of these lands. This is not a shift away from agriculture; it is a strengthening of it. The bill also provides clearer definitions for agricultural and aquacultural purposes, which helps reduce confusion and improve long-term planning for agricultural park tenants. Clarity in policy translates into confidence for farmers, and confidence leads to investment in the land, infrastructure, and local food systems. I would also like to respectfully note the provision allowing swine production using Korean natural farming methods in certain agricultural parks. This is particularly meaningful because Korean natural farming emphasizes soil regeneration, indigenous microorganisms, and reduced reliance on chemical inputs. These practices align closely with Hawai'i's values of sustainability, mālama ʻāina, and environmental stewardship. Supporting regenerative methods is not just good policy—it is an investment in the long-term health of our soil and ecosystems. From a broader systems perspective, H.B. 1616 strengthens Hawai'i's food security. As an island state that imports the vast majority of its food, we must do everything we can to support local production and local distribution. When agricultural parks are allowed to include value-added and market-oriented activities, we shorten supply chains, keep more food dollars circulating locally, and increase resilience during disruptions. For rural and recovery-impacted communities, including parts of East Hawai'i, agriculture is deeply tied to economic stability, cultural continuity, and community well-being. Flexible, farmer-centered policies like this one help agricultural parks evolve alongside real-world needs rather than remain constrained by outdated development plans. Importantly, this bill maintains appropriate safeguards. Lessees must remain in good standing, comply with environmental laws, and primarily derive income from agricultural use. This ensures that agricultural parks continue to serve genuine agricultural purposes while allowing the adaptability farmers need to thrive. In closing, H.B. 1616 is a practical, balanced, and forward-looking measure. It supports farmers, encourages value-added agriculture, promotes regenerative practices, and strengthens local food resilience across Hawai'i. For these reasons, I respectfully urge your strong support for H.B. 1616. Mahalo for your time, your leadership, and your continued commitment to the future of agriculture in our islands. Respectfully submitted, Robert Golden

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 3:58:10 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT!