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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

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

**Before the House Committee on
CULTURE & ARTS**

**Friday, February 13, 2026
9:15 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 309**

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL HB1703, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO LAND USE**

House Bill 1703, House Draft 1 proposes to permit rodeos and rodeo activities on various lands that are zoned for agricultural or pastoral use. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the intent of this bill and offers the following comments.**

The Department recognizes the educational, cultural, and ceremonial importance of rodeos and rodeo activities associated with the State's paniolo history. The Department also recognizes that it controls lands within agricultural districts, which primarily are used for pasture purposes. The Department's current pasture leases strictly limit these lands to "pastoral" use and appreciates the clarification that "rodeo and rodeo activities" are considered pastoral uses by amending Chapter 171, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), to include a definition for "rodeo or rodeo activities."

Chapter 171, HRS, vests the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) with broad discretion governing dispositions of public lands. BLNR has the authority to evaluate each proposed disposition, impose reasonable conditions, or deny requests when warranted.

Section 2 of this bill adds a new section to Chapter 171, HRS, providing that rodeo or rodeo activities "shall be allowed to be conducted on public lands." This provision supersedes BLNR's authority and may prevent it from imposing conditions based on the facts presented in a particular disposition application. For rodeo activities proposed on public lands, the inability to exercise this discretion may constrain BLNR's ability to demonstrate that it meaningfully evaluated impacts and practicable alternatives consistent with its public trust responsibilities. To address these concerns, the Department respectfully requests this amendment to Chapter 171, HRS, be removed.

Chapter 205, HRS, governs permitted land uses within the agricultural district and provides an established framework for land-use authorization and county implementation. Retaining this authorization within Chapter 205, HRS, rather than embedding a mandatory entitlement within Chapter 171, HRS, will prevent infringement on BLNR's authority.

Therefore, the Department respectfully requests the Committee amend the proposed Chapter 205, HRS, definition found on page 4, line 1 to read:

“Rodeo or rodeo activities” means a structured, organized, and permitted agricultural, equestrian, or cultural event on lands identified for agricultural or pastoral use that includes but is not limited to...”

Alternatively, if the Committee elects to retain the amendment to Chapter 171, HRS, the Department respectfully requests clarification that rodeo or rodeo activities are authorized uses subject to the approval by BLNR, rather than a mandated entitlement. Such clarification would preserve BLNR's ability to conduct individualized review, impose reasonable conditions to ensure that land dispositions remain consistent with statutory requirements and its public trust obligations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HUI HO'OU LU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE HOUSE CULTURE & ARTS
February 13, 2026
9:15 a.m.
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

HOUSE BILL NO. 1703, HD1
RELATING TO LAND USE

Chairperson Kapela, Vice Chair Kong, and Members of the Committee:

We are writing in **support** of allowing rodeos and related rodeo activities to be conducted on lands zoned for agricultural use. Rodeos are fundamentally connected to livestock production, ranching operations, and agricultural skills, and when properly managed, they represent a compatible and beneficial use of agricultural lands.

Rodeos are not merely recreational events; they are an extension of working ranch practices that showcase horsemanship, livestock handling, and land stewardship. These activities are deeply rooted in Hawai'i's paniolo tradition, which represents one of the oldest ranching cultures in the United States. Supporting rodeos on agricultural lands helps preserve this cultural legacy while reinforcing the continued relevance of ranching and livestock operations in Hawai'i today.

Rodeos and related agricultural events also create meaningful business development and revenue-generating opportunities for agricultural landowners and rural communities. These events support local ranchers, farmers, trainers, veterinarians, feed suppliers, farriers, equipment vendors, and small businesses.

They also create opportunities for value-added activities such as agricultural education events, local food sales, agritourism, and community gatherings that strengthen rural economies.

Allowing rodeos on agricultural lands provides land managers with a flexible tool to generate supplemental revenue that can be reinvested into land stewardship, infrastructure maintenance, and ongoing agricultural operations. This diversification supports the long-term financial sustainability of agricultural lands while keeping them in active agricultural use.

Rodeos play an important role in engaging youth and introducing the next generation to livestock, horsemanship, and agricultural careers. Rodeo activities provide hands-on learning experiences that build responsibility, work ethic, and practical skills associated with animal care and land management. These experiences can spark early interest in ranching, veterinary science, agricultural trades, and other careers critical to Hawai'i's food system.

Creating spaces where young people can safely and appropriately interact with livestock helps ensure the continuity of agricultural knowledge and skills. Rodeos offer an accessible entry point for youth who may not otherwise have exposure to working lands or livestock-based agriculture.

When conducted with appropriate safeguards, rodeos and rodeo-related activities are compatible with agricultural zoning and support the intent of keeping lands productive, economically viable, and culturally relevant. Clear operating standards, coordination with land managers, and respect for surrounding agricultural activities can ensure that rodeos enhance—rather than detract from—the primary agricultural purpose of these lands.

In summary, allowing rodeos and rodeo activities on agricultural lands supports ranching operations, preserves Hawai'i's paniolo heritage, generates economic activity, and creates meaningful pathways for youth engagement in agriculture. We respectfully encourage continued support for rodeos as a legitimate and valuable agricultural use that contributes to the vitality of Hawai'i's rural communities and food system.

Thank you for your consideration and ongoing commitment to Hawai'i's agricultural future. We would be pleased to discuss this further or provide additional information as needed.



Iron Workers Stabilization Fund

T. George Paris
Managing Director

February 13, 2026

Members of the House Committee on Culture & Arts
Thirty-Third Legislature, Regular Session of 2026

Re: Strong Support for HB1703, Authorizing Rodeos and Rodeo Activities on Agricultural Lands

Aloha Chair Kapela, Vice Kong and Members of the Committee,

The Ironworkers Stabilization Fund strongly supports HB1703, a measure that seeks to honor Hawai'i's rich paniolo culture by explicitly authorizing rodeos and related activities on agricultural-zoned lands. This bill represents an opportunity for economic growth, job creation, and enhanced community well-being across the islands.

The authorization of permanent venues and events for rodeo activities serves as a powerful catalyst for **new revenue and the growth of local businesses**. Rodeo events draw crowds and will directly inject money into local economies through tourism, ticket sales, concessions, and retail. This creates a new, stable, and culturally-relevant form of economic activity for our agricultural districts. Furthermore, the establishment, maintenance, and operation of rodeo facilities and events will create demand for a wide array of support services from local businesses—from veterinary and livestock suppliers to food vendors and event organizers. Crucially, the construction and ongoing maintenance of the necessary infrastructure—such as arenas, bleachers, corrals, fencing, and staging areas, as defined in Section 205-4.5(g)—will require the skilled labor of our local ironworkers, providing stable, family-sustaining union jobs.

Furthermore, this measure delivers much-needed **recreational and cultural activity for our people**. By promoting and formalizing the Hawaiian cowboy tradition, we preserve a valuable piece of local heritage. Rodeos offer a wholesome, family-friendly, and engaging recreational outlet for all residents, providing entertainment, competition, and a deep connection to the islands' history of ranching and horsemanship. This initiative creates a platform for youth development. By establishing structured programs centered on horsemanship and ranching skills, we can provide constructive activities that keep our youth busy and off the streets. For at-risk or troubled youth, the discipline and responsibility required to care for animals serve as mentorship tools. This approach offers a tangible solution to help combat rising crime, giving our young people the skills, guidance, and sense of purpose they need to choose a positive path.



Iron Workers Stabilization Fund

For these reasons—economic opportunity, job creation for our members, support for local enterprise, and the preservation of a vital cultural recreation—I urge the Committee to pass HB1703.

Respectfully,

T. George Paris
Managing Director



February 10, 2026

To: Chair Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair Sam Satoru Kong, and the House Committee on Culture and Arts

Subject: **HB1703 HD1** Relating to Land Use

Aloha,

I am **writing with comments regarding HB1703 HD1**, which authorizes rodeos and rodeo activities to be permitted on lands that are zoned for agricultural or pastoral uses.

We acknowledge the importance of honoring paniolo culture and promoting livestock stewardship. The uniquely Hawaiian world of paniolo culture that has roots predating the American old west is without a doubt something that the state ought to preserve and celebrate. The idea of rodeos or events that similarly celebrate paniolo culture are perfectly acceptable to us, and we are not opposed to seeing such events in the future.

That being said, **we urge the committee to table HB1703 HD1 for the time being**. While we appreciate paniolo culture, we cannot help but feel that the use of some of the lands that would be permitted to have rodeos for the purposes of this bill render it antithetical to our goal of a sustainable food system for Hawai'i.

By its very nature our archipelago has very limited land to use. As such every acre of land should be put to use thoughtfully, and so we feel that using lands designated as agricultural that additionally have any productivity potential for activities other than the production of food is a misallocation of such a valuable, finite resource. We believe that paniolo culture is something to be valued, but we question if the use of such lands to do so is truly the best way to celebrate it. Even if the portion of the bill allowing lands of A and B soil productivity to be used were amended to marginally productive grades, those grades could still be put to use or even improved via regenerative agricultural practices. Land that can be put towards a sustainable future for Hawai'i should be put to that purpose.

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.