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**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  
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD**  
**CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**  
**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026**  
**3:05 PM**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 224 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1707, HD1**  
**RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No.1707, HD1 that establishes a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) to reimburse eligible ranchers and farmers a portion of their costs to transport livestock, livestock products, agricultural commodities, and certain supplies, under certain conditions. Establishes a position to administer the Program. The Department supports the bill.

The Department agrees the costs incurred to transport agricultural commodities is increasing and acknowledges that shipping and transportation costs is a leading barrier to farmers' and/or ranchers' ability to expand operations and supports a program to reimburse costs incurred for intra- and interisland movement and not duplicate the provisions of the federal Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment (RTCP) that provides reimbursement for a percentage of the costs incurred for transportation of agricultural commodities or inputs to Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759  
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March 16, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1707, HD1**  
**RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
3:05 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, 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 1707, HD1**, which establishes a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to help offset the high cost of transporting agricultural products and essential supplies.

Transportation costs remain one of the most significant barriers facing Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers. Hawai'i's geographic isolation and interisland shipping realities place local producers at a competitive disadvantage, particularly for neighbor island operations that must ship both inputs and finished products to reach markets. Each increase in shipping, wharfage, fuel, or handling costs directly impacts farm viability, and these costs often cannot be passed on to consumers.

HB 1707, HD1 directly addresses these challenges by creating a targeted reimbursement program to assist eligible agricultural producers, cooperatives, and food hubs with a portion of their transportation costs. By including livestock, agricultural commodities, nursery products, and necessary supplies, the bill reflects the full scope of real-world agricultural operations in Hawai'i.

We appreciate that HB 1707, HD1 includes clear eligibility criteria, reasonable reimbursement caps, and annual reporting requirements to ensure accountability and transparency. Establishing a dedicated position within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to administer the program is also critical to ensuring timely reimbursements, consistent implementation, and effective outreach to producers statewide.

For many farmers and ranchers, transportation costs determine whether expansion is possible, whether products can reach market, and whether local agriculture can remain competitive. Programs like this help level the playing field, support neighbor island producers, and strengthen Hawai'i's agriculture and food system by reducing one of the most persistent structural barriers to growth.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 16, 2026, at 3:05PM  
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB1707 HD1 Relating to Agriculture**

Aloha e Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 1707 House Draft 1 (HB1707 HD1), which establishes a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to reimburse eligible ranchers and farmers a portion of their costs to transport livestock, livestock products, agricultural commodities, and certain supplies. It also establishes a position to administer the program.

HB1707 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Agriculture. This policy pillar emphasizes sustainable local food production and economic viability for producers. The result of these systemic improvements is increased food system security and resilience. By lowering transportation costs for farmers, ranchers, producers, and food hubs, this bill lowers the cost of living for those who purchase food, lowers the cost of doing business for those producing and selling food, and improves the quality of life for all stakeholders involved.

The Chamber appreciate this bill's intent towards equity, providing additional support for small and medium scale farmers. Further, with food costs rising as it gets transported between islands, this bill helps to lower food costs for communities that are further from Oahu. For the reasons of equity promotion, lowering the cost of living, and lowering the cost of doing business, the Chamber stands in strong support of this measure.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 1707 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.



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Natalie Urminska  
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Environment 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 and seeks to amend HB1707.**

HB1707 is a proactive approach to addressing the logistical and financial challenges faced by Hawai'i's agricultural community. By establishing the Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program, the bill especially provides a much-needed relief for neighbor island farmers, who are currently burdened by exorbitant double shipping costs. These expenses arise from the need to import essential production inputs and subsequently transport finished goods to primary markets. Reducing transportation costs will enable farmers to allocate resources more efficiently, thereby increasing their capacity to produce and deliver fresh, local produce to Hawai'i's communities.

While HFU fully supports the intent of this measure, the current draft leaves the term "necessary supplies" undefined, which risks administrative inconsistency and may exclude vital materials. To ensure this program is robust and predictable for farmers, we recommend aligning the state's language with the established federal Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment (RTCP) program (7 CFR § 755.2).

Specifically, we propose the following amendment to SECTION 2 (f) of the bill to add the following definition:

"Necessary supplies" includes chemicals, feed, fertilizer, fuel, seeds, plants, supplies, equipment parts, and other inputs as determined by the department of agriculture and biosecurity.1

We request the addition of honey to the definition of Agricultural commodity in the same section.

"Agricultural commodity" has the same meaning as in section 145-21, including nursery production and honey.

Adopting these definition provides the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity with a clear, functional framework while maintaining the flexibility to adapt to evolving agricultural needs. By adopting these established federal standards to explicitly include critical inputs like fuel and equipment parts, the legislature will ensure that this program is both administratively seamless and capable of addressing the true, comprehensive cost of farming in an island state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

**HB1707 HD1**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

March 16, 2026, 3:05 PM  
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB1707 HD1** which establishes a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to reimburse eligible ranchers and farmers a portion of their costs to transport livestock, livestock products, agricultural commodities, and certain supplies, under certain conditions. Establishes a position to administer the Program.

The nature of our island counties means transportation costs can often be a necessary, but prohibitive, expense. In order to grow agriculture and increase local food production, the state must recognize the high transportation costs required to provide for all our communities. In the case of beef, the majority of cattle are produced on neighbor islands, while the dense population of consumers are on Oahu. In addition, transportation is required when selling animals for increasing herds and improving herd genetics. We support a cost reimbursement program for transportation to assist in the transportation expenses of ranching and farming operations.

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





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TO: Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION  
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: March 16, 2026

TIME: 3:05pm

RE: HB1707 HD1 Relating to Agriculture

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure to establish a local agriculture transportation cost reimbursement program to ensure that certain local agricultural producers receive support to offset the high costs of transporting goods to market and to obtain necessary supplies. As the measure notes, increasing local agricultural production is essential to the long-term sustainability and food security of the State. However, local agricultural producers face significant economic challenges, particularly with the high costs of transporting agricultural products and necessary supplies across the State.

Our local agricultural sector and food manufacturing sector has tremendous potential for growth. When the state takes steps to support these businesses it helps create an economy that is more locally focused, more diverse, more resilient, and stronger for us all. We would support expanding this program, now or in the future to include transportation cost reimbursements for all food producers and other local manufacturers.

We encourage the Committee to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



# MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT  
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 224  
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026 AT 3:05 P.M.**

To The Honorable Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Agriculture & Environment

## **SUPPORT HB1707 HD1 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

The Maui Chamber of Commerce supports HB1707 HD1 as it addresses a longstanding barrier for local ranchers and farmers: the high cost of transporting goods and supplies across islands and within the state. By establishing a reimbursement program for transportation costs, this bill has the potential to make local agriculture more viable and competitive.

Reducing transportation expenses directly supports small and mid-sized producers, who often face disproportionate logistical challenges due to Hawaii's geographic isolation. Lowering these costs can help keep more locally grown food in our communities, decrease reliance on imports, and enhance food security. Additionally, by supporting the economic sustainability of agriculture, the bill aligns with broader efforts to preserve open space and rural landscapes, which provide environmental and cultural benefits.

We respectfully recommend that the final version of this measure include provisions for regular program evaluation and stakeholder input, to ensure that reimbursements are distributed fairly and that the program adapts to changing industry needs. We also encourage coordination with existing agricultural support initiatives to maximize efficiency and impact. Thank you for considering this important step toward a more resilient local food system.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap  
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

**HB-1707-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 12:57:34 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/16/2026 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

Honorable Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee,

As the chapter president of the Hilo County Farm Bureau, I write in strong support of the proposed measure on behalf of our Board of Directors and our members.

This measure addresses the ever-present challenge of rising freight costs in our state. Increasing transportation costs create barriers to markets for agricultural producers, especially for those located on neighbor islands. This bill is responsive to the needs of local farmers and ranchers and will deliver immediate benefits for agricultural businesses.

Hilo County Farm Bureau urges you to pass this bill. Thank you for hearing this measure.

Megan Blazak  
Chapter President  
Hilo County Farm Bureau

**HB-1707-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 4:20:40 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/16/2026 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Keith	Testifying for McCandless Ranch	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If the state wants to increase local food production, assistance with transportation is needed.



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

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 16, 2026 3:05 PM  
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street**

**RE: HB1707 HD1 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

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 HB1707 HD1** which establishes a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to reimburse eligible ranchers and farmers a portion of their costs to transport livestock, livestock products, agricultural commodities, and certain supplies, under certain conditions. Establishes a position to administer the Program

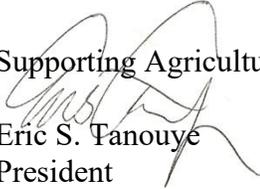
This bill will help our geographically disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and support all of agriculture in Hawaii. This will help farmers grow and deliver products, while reducing the transportation cost of inputs and bringing the products to market. It will give Hawaii growers a much needed boost to compete with products coming from outside the 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.



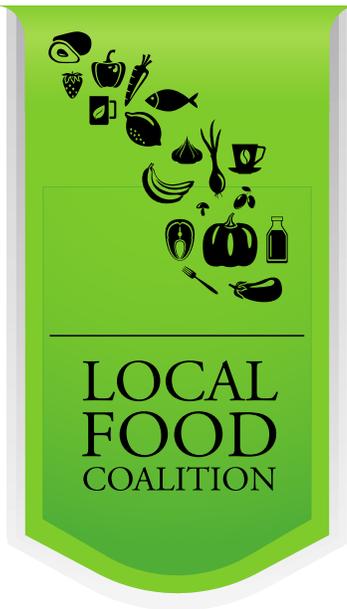
If you have any questions at this time, I would be happy to discuss them and can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 ext 2627, cell 960-1433 and email [eric@greenpointnursery.com](mailto:eric@greenpointnursery.com).

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,

  
Eric S. Tanouye

President

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association



SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
Monday, March 16, 2026 – 3:05 p.m.  
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

## **HB 1707 HD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

### **SUPPORT**

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

Hawai'i Aquaculture &  
Aquaponics Association

Hawai'i Cattlemen's  
Council

Hawai'i Farm Bureau  
Federation

Hawai'i Farmers' Union  
United

Hawai'i Food Industry  
Association

Hawai'i Food  
Manufacturers  
Association

Kohala Center

Land Use Research  
Foundation of Hawai'i

Maui Farm to School  
Network (Maui F2SN)

Ulupono Initiative

The Local Food Coalition supports HB 1707 HD1, which establishes a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to reimburse eligible ranchers and farmers a portion of their costs to transport livestock, livestock products, agricultural commodities, and certain supplies, under certain conditions.

Transportation remains one of the most significant barriers to expanding local food production. Rising inter-island shipping costs limit producers' ability to reach markets and compete with imported goods. By offsetting a portion of these costs, this measure directly supports farmers, ranchers, food hubs, and cooperatives working to strengthen Hawai'i's food system.

Reducing transportation burdens will help increase local production, improve market access, and support statewide food security goals.

The Local Food Coalition is an organization comprised of farmers, ranchers, livestock producers, investors, and other stakeholders united by a shared commitment to building a robust and self-sufficient food system for Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

**HB-1707-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 8:19:39 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/16/2026 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Warren Watanabe	Testifying for Maui County Farm Bureau	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Maui County Farm Bureau supports HB1707 HD1, Establishing a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity. The recently approved increase in inter-island shipping rates adds to the ever increasing costs of production. This increase affects both inputs and outputs. Farmers and ranchers face critical decisions as to the future of their operations. Do they expand and ship off island, reduce production to save on shipping and focus on on-island sales, or maintain their current size. This bill levels the playing field for our neighbor island farmers and ranchers by offsetting some of the shipping costs within the state. We request your support of HB1707 HD1. Mahalo.



## EAST OAHU COUNTY FARM BUREAU

910 CALIFORNIA AVE., WAHIAWA, HI 96786

March 14, 2026

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair, and Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
State Capitol, 415 S. Beretania St.  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, 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 1707 HD1**, "Relating to Agriculture," which would allow partial reimbursement for transportation costs required to ship agricultural products and necessary agricultural supplies within Hawai'i.

Transportation costs are one of the biggest challenges facing local farmers and ranchers, especially for neighbor island producers who must ship both inputs and finished products. These costs directly affect whether farming remains viable. HB 1707 HD1 provides targeted, accountable assistance that helps level the playing field and strengthens Hawai'i's local food system.

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-1707-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 5:41:50 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/16/2026 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Randy Cabral	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

**HB-1707-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 11:23:12 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/16/2026 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John R. Gordines	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1707 as the costs of production continue to cripple our Hawaii farmers and ranchers. This will encourage import replacement and allow our farmers and ranchers to continue to feed Hawaii!

mahalo

**HB-1707-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 1:54:07 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/16/2026 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mark Phillipson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Committee Members,

Am in support of this bill, given the extraordinary increase in rates given to local inter island transport companies. Interisland transportation costs are no different than a tariff, of 25% on Food! Needs a fix by this legislation

Mark Phillipson

**HB-1707-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2026 11:17:07 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/16/2026 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sara G Moore	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the AEN Committee,

I support HB 1707, HD1, which helps offset the high cost of transporting agricultural products and essential supplies in Hawai‘i.

TNow more than ever are e high cost of inputs affecting profitability of ranchers and farmers. There is no end in sight. We struggle enough with marginal net profits.

HB 1707, HD1 provides targeted, accountable assistance to strengthen Hawai‘i’s local food system.

Mahalo for your support of local agriculture.

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kyle Caires and I am writing in support of the HB1707 HD1 bill establishing a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

Without question, transportation costs are one of the biggest barriers to agricultural production in Hawai'i. Because our farms and ranches operate across multiple islands, producers must regularly transport livestock, feed, harvested crops, and supplies between islands and to processing or market locations. Before we even start, it takes extra freight costs to bring agricultural equipment, livestock feed and other supplies into the state. Farmers and Ranchers buy everything at retail, sell at wholesale, and the additional cost of logistics can be substantial and often determines whether locally produced food can compete with imports.

Ranchers and farmers operate on slim margins; transportation expenses can make the difference between staying in business or reducing production. A reimbursement program would help offset a portion of these costs, making it more feasible to move livestock and agricultural commodities to where they are needed.

This program could strengthen local supply chains and support agricultural businesses, ultimately improve Hawai'i's food security so more locally produced food reach markets.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony, I am willing to provide more input if requested.

**Dr. Kyle Caires**  
**Caires Farms**

**HB-1707-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 10:49:18 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/16/2026 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Janet Ashman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1707, HD1.

Farmers and ranchers need help with the high cost of transporting ag products and critical supplies throughout Hawai'i.

This is especially true for neighbor island producers who have to ship both farm inputs and their finished products. Please pass this measure to help farmers stay in business. Thank you.

**HB-1707-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 5:39:02 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/16/2026 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jason Moniz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testkfyng in support of HB1701 HD1