

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:52:59 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Gottlieb	Ponoholo Ranch Limited	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Transportation costs are rising, but necessary for operations

Agriculture is important to food production and the state needs to help with transportation costs in order to increase local food production



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
Rep. Cory M. Chun, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

HB1707
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, February 11, 2026, 9:30 AM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB2246** 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





February 11, 2026

Rep. Cory M. Chun, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

RE: HB 1707 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE
Hearing date: February 11, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Young Brothers, LLC (“YB”)¹ in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **HB 1707**. As drafted, this measure would establish a *Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program* within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to reimburse eligible ranchers, farmers, cooperative aggregators, and food hubs, a portion of their costs to transport eligible livestock, livestock products, agricultural commodities, and certain supplies, under certain conditions.

YB has always been a strong supporter of local agricultural given its importance to the state’s resiliency and self-sufficiency. Indeed, YB currently offers deep discounts to its Hawaii-based agricultural customers via its *Island Agricultural Product Discount (IPAD)*.² Unfortunately, YB’s current agricultural discounts are funded internally, via higher prices for other YB rate payers. YB strongly supports moving the discount program to the proper public policy organization (e.g., the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity) and extending the funding requirements to a broader base of the State’s citizens. Placing administration of this program with the appropriate State agency and supporting it through explicit State appropriations reflects sound policy design and is consistent with recommendations issued more than five years ago by the Water Carrier Working Group convened pursuant to S.R. 125, S.D. 1 (2020).³

For the reasons stated above, YB offers **STRONG SUPPORT** of this measure.

¹ Young Brothers, LLC (“YB”) is a water carrier that transports cargo by tug and barge between the islands of O’ahu, Hawai’i, Kaua’i, Maui, Moloka’i, and Lāna’i. Since 1900, customers across the state have relied on YB’s frequent, regular, and universal sailings to serve as the bridge that connects all communities in this island-state. YB is currently the only water carrier statutorily authorized to ship cargo from point-to-point within the state. As a regulated water carrier, YB is subject to the regulatory authority of the Hawaii Public Utilities Commission (“PUC”).

² Young Brothers Local Freight Tariff No. 5-A, Pg. No. 61.

³ See e.g., Recommendation No. 6: Local Waterborne Cargo Subsidies Program from the Final Hawaii Water Carriers Working Group Report, submitted to the legislature on December 27, 2021 and available at: <https://puc.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Final-Water-Carriers-Working-Group-Report-12-01-2021.pdf>

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

February 11, 2026

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Thank you for your service to the State of Hawaii, and for the opportunity to testify offering comments on this measure.

Sincerely,

Kris Nakagawa
Vice President, External and Legal Affairs



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 |
Honolulu, HI 96813
P: 808-533-1292 | e:
info@hawaiiifood.com

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Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, Odom, *Advisor*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Advisor*
Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale, *Immediate Past Chair*

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

DATE: February 11, 2026

TIME: 9:30am

RE: HB1707 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.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 11, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 1707
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice-Chair Kusch, 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, 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 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 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 food system by reducing one of the most persistent structural barriers to growth.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:20:22 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Warren Watanabe	Maui County Farm Bureau	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Maui County Farm Bureau supports HB1707, Relating to Agriculture.

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:44:15 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Honorable Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, 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.

Thank you for hearing this measure and we urge you to support the bill.

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:13:03 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ethan Romanchak	Native Nursery, LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill as we have participated in the similar federal version of it RTCP and it really helps to offset the cost of doing business in agriculture.
Mahalo



Date of Hearing: 11 February, 2026

To: Chair Cory M. Chun, Vice Chair Matthias Kusch, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

Subject: **HB1707**, Relating to Agriculture

Aloha,

Hawai'i Food+ Policy **supports** HB1707 which establishes a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DoAB) to help offset the high costs local farmers, ranchers, and food hubs face when transporting agricultural products and essential supplies within the state.

According to findings cited in the bill and local reporting, thirty-nine percent of participating local ranchers and farmers identify shipping and transportation costs as a leading obstacle to expanding production, limiting their ability to compete and reducing the overall productivity of the agricultural sector. Additional strain on local producers is expected as the tariff for wharfage and pipeline toll rates is set to reflect a 4.1 percent increase.

National data from the United States Department of Agriculture shows that rising transportation and fuel costs directly increase the cost of bringing food to market for all farmers, with trucking costs reaching record highs in recent years.² Each of these factors contribute to increased costs to procure goods. These impacts are particularly severe for producers in geographically isolated areas who lack alternative transport options.² In Hawai'i, this burden is even greater due to the state's reliance on interisland shipping and cargo transport, where a lack of competition can lead to significant rate hikes with no alternative options to receive required goods.

Local reporting from Civil Beat further documents how Hawai'i farmers face disproportionately high shipping costs for both products and essential inputs like sugar and jars, making local agriculture less competitive than cheaper mainland imports.¹

We respectfully urge you to pass HB 1707. Providing targeted transportation cost relief will strengthen local agriculture, support small-scale producers, improve food security, and help Hawai'i move toward greater self-sufficiency. This bill addresses a clear and documented barrier with a practical solution that supports our farmers while strengthening our local food system.

Mahalo for your consideration!
Brandon Kinard & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

[1] Eichenstein, A. (2023, August 9). USDA program helps Hawaii farmers offset high shipping costs. Honolulu Civil Beat.

[2] Mulik, K. (2025, April). Impact of rising diesel prices and truck-driver availability on food transportation and distribution (Summary). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service. <http://dx.doi.org/10.9752/TS450.04-2025>

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.

LATE

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 11:14:10 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Theresa Thompson	Thompson Ranch	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1707 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE TRANSPORTATION

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. Appropriates funds.

Mahalo,

Theresa Thompson

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:06:57 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jimmy Gomes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I stand in support of this bill.

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 4:17:59 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Support

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 6:29:51 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Woody Child	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I Strongly Support HB1707.

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:12:03 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Douglas Beaton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

- Transportation costs are rising, but necessary for operations
- Agriculture is important to food production and the state needs to help with transportation costs in order to increase local food production

mahalo

Doug Beaton

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 3:06:27 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT

LATE

HB-1707

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:28:59 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Frederick M. Mencher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

I support HB 1707, which helps offset the high cost of transporting agricultural products and essential supplies in 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 provides targeted, accountable assistance that helps level the playing field and strengthens Hawai'i's local food system.

Mahalo for your support of local agriculture.