



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**  
H.B. NO. 1953, RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

**BEFORE THE:**  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 18, 2026      **TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 325

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Travis T. Moon or Christopher J.I. Leong,  
Deputy Attorneys General

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Chair Chun and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill establishes the Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) to expand access to funding and technical assistance for conservation agriculture training, implementation, and infrastructure development. The bill authorizes the Department to contract with or award grants to nonprofit organizations and to provide funding support to farmers, ranchers, land managers, and conservation partners implementing conservation practices.

The bill provides that the Department may award grants to "a nonprofit, or a consortium of nonprofits with experience in administering statewide food system funds, agriculture and conservation cost-share programs, and delivering conservation agriculture training and technical assistance" (page 4, lines 13-18). However, the bill does not include standards for those grants. Article VII, section 4, of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii requires that "[n]o grant of public money or property shall be made except pursuant to standards provided by law." Accordingly, we recommend that the bill be amended to include sufficient grant standards in the bill. We have attached draft standards to this testimony as a sample for consideration. These standards could be

inserted beginning on page 5, line 3, as a new section 141- (e). Additionally, we stand ready to work with you to develop more specific standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.

POSSIBLE STANDARDS FOR THE GRANTS IN THIS BILL

(e) The department of agriculture and biosecurity may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to establish procedures, eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria, reporting requirements, and other administrative provisions necessary to implement and administer grants awarded under this section. Applications for grants shall be submitted to the department of agriculture and biosecurity in a form and manner prescribed by the department of agriculture and biosecurity. At a minimum, the applicant shall:

- (1) Be licensed or accredited, in accordance with federal, state, or county statutes, regulations rules, or ordinances, to conduct the activities or provide the services for which a grant is awarded;
- (2) Provide a detailed plan outlining the scope, objectives, and projected impact of the proposed project and a clear breakdown of how grant funds will be used;
- (3) Agree to use state funds exclusively for the purposes of this program;
- (4) Demonstrate the capability and capacity to properly carry out the proposed project and use the grant for the purposes of the program;
- (5) Comply with all applicable federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law;
- (6) Agree not to use state funds for purposes of entertainment or perquisites;
- (7) Comply with any additional requirements as the department of agriculture and biosecurity may prescribe;
- (8) Comply with all applicable federal, state, and county statutes, regulations, rules, and ordinances;

Testimony of the Department of the Attorney General

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- (9) Agree to indemnify and save harmless the State of Hawaii and its officers, agents, and employees from and against any and all claims arising out of or resulting from activities carried out or projects undertaken with funds provided hereunder and procure sufficient insurance to provide this indemnification if requested to do so by the department of agriculture and biosecurity; and
- (10) Agree to make available to the department of agriculture and biosecurity all records the applicant may have relating to the grant, to allow state agencies to monitor the applicant's compliance with this section."

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**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 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS**

**FEBRUARY 18, 2026  
9:30 AM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1953  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1953. This bill establishes the Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department). Appropriates funds and requires a report to the Legislature. The Department supports this bill.

Agricultural conservation practices for tropical weather conditions, small scale production models and cultural stewardship models unique to Hawaii will assist in making agriculture in the state more resilient and sustainable. Having a statewide coordinated system that provides conservation training, cost-share or implementation assistance and infrastructure development will allow for environmental stewardship, improved soil and water health, and carbon emissions reduction.

The Department would recommend that a longer timeline be provided for program development due to the statewide comprehensive nature of the program and respectfully requests that a position be provided to properly oversee implementation of the proposed program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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February 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1953**  
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 1953**, which establishes a Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers operate in diverse tropical environments that require locally adapted conservation practices. A voluntary, incentive-based program that supports soil health, water conservation, erosion control, composting, and other stewardship practices can strengthen long-term agricultural productivity while protecting natural resources.

By providing training opportunities, cost-share support, and infrastructure funding, this pilot program offers practical tools to help producers implement conservation practices that improve resilience and sustainability. Investments in soil health and water management directly contribute to the long-term viability of Hawai'i agriculture.

HFB appreciates that this measure establishes a pilot program with reporting requirements, allowing the Legislature to evaluate outcomes and refine the program before broader expansion.

Mahalo for your consideration and for supporting Hawai'i's agricultural community.



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State President

Christian Zuckerman  
Vice-President

Maureen Datta  
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Kaiea Medeiros  
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Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura  
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska  
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems 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 HB1953.**

HB1953 establishes the Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program to subsidize good land management practices in Hawaii. This program will be instrumental in promoting methods that enhance soil health, improve water management, and support biodiversity, all of which are key to the long-term viability of our agricultural industry. By allocating resources and funding to this program, the state acknowledges the importance of integrating environmental stewardship into agricultural operations, which will benefit not only the farmers but also the broader community through improved environmental health and food security.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union



Date of Hearing: February 18, 2026

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

Subject: **HB1953**, Relating to Agriculture

Aloha,

Hawai'i Food+ Policy is writing in strong support of HB1953, which establishes a Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program, specific to Hawai'i's unique needs. This measure is a critical step toward securing our state's long-term food security, climate resilience, and environmental health, by providing the necessary resources to farmers and land stewards to adopt regenerative and climate-smart practices.

We appreciate that this bill encompasses not only commercial farmers and ranchers but also cooperatives, community-based projects, and 'āina restoration organizations. This ensures that our efforts are culturally grounded and reflective of Hawai'i's tropical agroecosystems. The professional development opportunities through the program are strong assets for farmers. By providing stipends and workshops, this bill ensures that farmers have the knowledge and capacity to implement sustainable practices.

This program provides critical funding for infrastructure that is often the primary barrier to adopting regenerative practices. The bill proposes a \$3,000,000 appropriation for this program. This pilot program can serve as a valuable "down payment" towards stimulating local production to then meet state mandated local procurement minimums. This is a necessary investment in the health of our soil and water, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and the overall resilience of our local food system.

We urge the committee to pass HB1953 to empower our local producers and protect our working landscapes for future generations.

Mahalo,  
Brandon Kinard & the Food+ Policy Team  
#fixourfoodsystem

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[1] *Local food production and consumption*. Aloha Challenge. (n.d.).  
<https://alohachallenge.hawaii.gov/pages/local-food-production-and-consumption>

**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**

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

**HB1953**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 9:30 AM  
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

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

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB1953** which establishes the Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

Well-managed cattle can contribute to increased soil health, in turn improving water retention and carbon sequestration. This program provides incentives, technical assistance, and education for these practices, which will make it more feasible for a wider range of producers to adopt practices that benefit the land. While we appreciate the federal funding program that provide these services, we have found that they are tailored to continental practices and costs. A state run program would be beneficial to Hawaii's producers. We have many who have shovel ready projects, but could utilize funding and technical support to get the job done.

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



**HB-1953**

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 6:13:06 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

1953 HB RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

**LATE**



PO Box 4, Kunia, Hawaii, 96759 || 808-622-9026 || [www.agstewardshiphawaii.org](http://www.agstewardshiphawaii.org)

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February 17, 2026

Aloha e Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems,

**Re: Testimony in Support of HB1953, Relating to Agriculture**

Please accept this letter in support of HB1953/SB3296, Relating to Agriculture. HB1953 establishes a pilot program to provide coordinated training, technical assistance, cost-share opportunities, and on-farm infrastructure support for farmers, ranchers, and land stewards across Hawai'i. This bill gives the state a chance to **step into the field alongside farmers**, helping support those who are working to supply our local markets.

**The model for this bill is based on the successful DaBux program**, administered by DAB and The Food Basket over the past five years, which has demonstrated the effectiveness of coordinated training, technical assistance, cost-share opportunities, and on-farm infrastructure support. We understand there is another similar bill, HB1621/SB2110, and we are highly supportive of that effort and look forward to productive debate on how to best advance this work. **The existence of two strong proposals underscores the critical importance of this issue.**

We recognize that our institutions face challenges, and farmers cannot continue waiting for long-term institutional reforms before they receive assistance.

Mahalo for your leadership and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if additional information would be helpful.

Warm wishes,

Dr. Amanda Shaw, PhD, Statewide Food Systems Coordinator  
Email: [amanda@agstewardshiphawaii.org](mailto:amanda@agstewardshiphawaii.org),  
Tel: 808 429 5310