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March 16, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**TESTIMONY ON HB 2139, HD1**  
**RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES**

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice-Chair Kidani, 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 2139, HD1**, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawaii to conduct a study on effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland Longhorn Beetle.

The Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) is an invasive pest that targets many agriculturally important and culturally significant plants, including 'ulu, cacao, avocado, citrus, hibiscus, and kukui. The first known detection in Hawai'i occurred in Puna in 2009, and since then, it has expanded its host range and is now established in Hilo and throughout the Hāmākua Coast, with confirmed presence as far north as Honoka'a and Āhualoa. Once established, QLB infestations can result in severe damage or death of host plants.

Although the Queensland Longhorn Beetle is a relatively newer invasive threat compared to other pests Hawai'i has faced, its spread underscores a familiar and concerning pattern. When invasive species are not addressed early and effectively, they become far more costly and difficult to manage over time. Farmers and ranchers are often the first to experience these impacts directly, through lost production, increased management costs, and reduced viability of certain crops.

HB 2139, HD1 represents a proactive step by investing in research to identify effective treatment and control methods before this pest becomes further entrenched statewide. Supporting research through the University of Hawai'i is consistent with past efforts to

strengthen Hawai'i's invasive species response by pairing science-based solutions with on-the-ground agricultural realities.

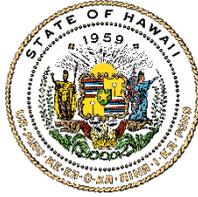
More broadly, this measure highlights the need for Hawai'i to continue strengthening its biosecurity and invasive species prevention systems. Without sustained and coordinated efforts to address invasive species at all stages, prevention, detection, research, and response, Hawai'i will continue to face new pest introductions that threaten agricultural production. This directly undermines shared goals such as increasing local food production, expanding Farm to School and institutional purchasing programs, and strengthening food system resilience.

HFB supports HB 2139, HD1 as part of a larger strategy to protect Hawai'i's agricultural sector, environment, and food security. Addressing invasive species early and effectively is essential if we expect farmers and ranchers to meet the State's long-term agricultural goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE  
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT  
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS  
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES  
ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

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

Before the Senate Committee on  
EDUCATION

Monday, March 16, 2026  
1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 2139, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

House Bill 2139, House Draft 1 appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i to conduct a study on effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland longhorn beetle. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure, provided it does not replace or adversely impact priorities outlined in the Executive Supplemental Budget request.**

*Acalolepta aesthetica*, often called the Queensland longhorn beetle (QLB), poses a serious threat to many tropical plant species in Hawai'i. QLBs tend to attack stressed, weakened, and dying trees. Larvae bore into trunks and branches as they develop, which can severely weaken small trees. Repeated attacks may eventually kill the trees. Of particular concern to the Department, federal researchers have confirmed that QLBs have been found attacking the native plant alaha'e. This invasive beetle most often infests culturally important plants in Hawai'i, such as kukui and 'ulu. It has also decimated cacao trees on the east side of Hawai'i Island, causing several cacao farmers to abandon the crop.

By 2026, nearly 20 plant species have been identified as larval hosts for QLB in East Hawai'i. As this invasive beetle continues to spread, the list of vulnerable plants is expected to increase.

There are no known traditional pesticides that effectively control tree-larva infestations over the long term. However, an integrated pest management program combining active systemic

insecticide treatments at the appropriate stage of beetle development with cultural and mechanical controls may provide reliable management options.

Hawai'i needs effective long-term management tools and integrated pest management programs to identify, treat, and reduce QLB populations at all stages of development. Therefore, the Department strongly supports funding additional research on QLB to adequately address this major invasive threat.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

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

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY**  
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI A KIA'I MEAOLA  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512  
Phone: (808) 973-9560 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026  
1:00 PM**

**CONFERENCE ROOM 229 & VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2139, HD1  
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES**

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2139, HD1, relating to invasive species. This bill appropriates monies to the University of Hawai'i to conduct a study on effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) in Hawai'i.

QLB is a pest that targets not only agricultural crops such as cacao, avocado, and citrus, but also plants of significant cultural value in Hawaiian culture, such as kukui and 'ulu. The Department recognizes the importance of having a diverse range of management strategies and treatment methods to effectively address this threat. This includes supporting research and innovation to identify effective, environmentally responsible solutions. Therefore, the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity supports this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



The Senate  
Committee on Education  
Monday, March 16, 2026  
1:00 PM Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
State Capitol

### Testimony in Support of HB2139 HD1

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee,

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of HB2139 HD1**, *Relating to Invasive Species*, which provides funds to the University of Hawaii to study effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland Longhorn beetle (QLB).

As noted in the bill, QLB can damage or kill a number of agriculturally and culturally significant tree species, including breadfruit, kukui, citrus, cacao, avocado, and many others. At this time, QLB are found in limited areas of Hawaii Island. Unfortunately, there is no treatment for QLB infestation. The only control method is to destroy infested trees, chip them in place, and avoid moving infested material to new areas.

The funds provided by HB2139 HD1 will allow the University of Hawaii to study promising treatments for QLB to reduce population numbers, and, hopefully, prevent the spread of the pest to new areas and islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and to support HB2139 HD1.

Aloha,

Christy Martin  
CGAPS Program Manager

Stephanie Easley  
CGAPS Legal Fellow



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

#### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Education  
March 16, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

By

Bonnie Irwin

Chancellor

University of Hawai'i at Hilo

#### HB 2139 HD1 – RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES.

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2139 HD1. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) supports HB 2139 HD1 which will allocate funding to essential research needed to address the growing threat posed by the Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) in Hawai'i.

As QLB spreads across East Hawai'i, it has been devastating to farmers who are losing cacao, citrus, avocado, and several other crop plants to these larvae. By targeting profitable crops on which local farmers depend, QLB has the potential to cause millions of dollars in losses to Hawai'i farmers. QLB also has ecological consequences. At UH Hilo's restoration site in Keaukaha, we have seen widespread mortality of kukui and 'ulu trees as a result of QLB damage. The death of these key canopy trees allows for invasive plants to move in and take over the forest. We must address this issue to mitigate the harm QLB can cause to local farms, forests, and community spaces.

Nematode biocontrol offers a promising solution to the issue of QLB. In an approach developed by scientists at USDA-ARS, locally isolated nematodes, *Heterorhabditis indica*, are injected into QLB-infested trees, where they then selectively target and kill the larvae. UH Hilo research on kukui and 'ulu trees in the summer of 2025 found that in most cases, nematode treatment either reduces or eliminates QLB infection. Numerous accounts from local growers also reflect the effectiveness of this treatment. Additionally, *H. indica* are non-toxic and safe to other organisms like cattle and their human handlers. This biocontrol gives us an opportunity to proactively control QLB before it spreads across Hawai'i and to other islands.

While this biocontrol is effective, it remains very time intensive and often more than one treatment is necessary to eliminate QLB in the tree altogether. It is therefore essential that we invest in research on the life cycle of QLB and implementation of different treatment methods that might be faster or more effective. It is essential to develop procedures to scale up the treatment of trees on large areas of land and to assist local farmers. Such research will contribute to reducing QLB populations in East Hawai'i and support growers in protecting their trees using a non-toxic method. In addition, a low-

cost, effective treatment that is scalable will be extremely valuable if QLB eventually makes it to other islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2139 HD1.

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 12:16:35 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emma Stierhoff	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee,

My name is Emma Stierhoff, and I am a Lead Technician at UH Hilo under the Liko Nā Pilina Restoration Project. I am writing to express my support of HB 2139, which will allocate funding to essential research needed to address the growing threat posed by the Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) in Hawai‘i. As QLB spreads across East Hawai‘i, it has been devastating to farmers who are losing cacao, citrus, avocado, and several other crop plants to these larvae. By targeting many profitable crops on which local farmers depend, QLB has the potential to cause millions of dollars in losses to Hawai‘i farmers. In a 2025 survey by the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture, the top issue identified by Hawai‘i growers was invasive species and pest management. QLB also has ecological consequences. At our restoration site in Keaukaha, we have seen widespread mortality of kukui and ‘ulu trees as a result of QLB damage. The death of these key canopy trees allows for invasive plants to move in and take over the forest. We must address this issue to mitigate the harm QLB can cause to local farms, forests, and community spaces.

Nematode biocontrol offers a promising solution to the issue of QLB. In an approach developed by scientists at USDA-ARS, locally isolated nematodes, *Heterorhabditis indica*, are injected into QLB-infested trees, where they then selectively target and kill the larvae. Research we did on kukui and ‘ulu trees in the summer of 2025 found that in most cases, nematode treatment either reduces or eliminates QLB infection. Numerous accounts from local growers also reflect the effectiveness of this treatment. Additionally, *H. indica* are non-toxic and safe to other organisms like cattle and their human handlers. This biocontrol gives us an opportunity to proactively control QLB before it spreads across Hawai‘i and to other islands.

While this biocontrol is effective, it remains very time intensive and often more than one treatment is necessary to eliminate QLB in the tree altogether. It is therefore essential that we invest in research that will contribute to establishing faster and more effective means of treating. This will allow us to develop procedures to scale up the treatment of trees on large areas of land and to assist local farmers. Such research will contribute to reducing QLB populations in East Hawai‘i and support growers in protecting their trees using a non-toxic method. In addition, a low-cost, effective treatment that is scalable will be extremely valuable if QLB eventually makes it to other islands.

Please vote for HB 2139 to help mitigate the spread of Queensland Longhorn Beetle in Hawai‘i, supporting our local farmers and our ‘āina.

Mahalo nui for your time,

Emma Stierhoff

**Officers**

Kaipo Kekona  
State President



Christian Zuckerman  
Vice-President

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Secretary

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Maui

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North Shore, O'ahu

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Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska  
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Senate Education 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 HB2139.**

HB2139 HD1 is an essential legislative measure that directs much-needed resources to address the threat posed by the Queensland longhorn beetle. By allocating funds to the University of Hawaii for a study on effective treatment methods, this bill provides a scientific foundation for developing strategies to mitigate the beetle's damaging impact. The Queensland longhorn beetle poses a dire risk to crucial crops like 'ulu, cacao, avocado, and citrus, which are not only integral to Hawaii's agricultural economy but also to the cultural heritage and food security of the islands.

Prompt action through research and development of treatment methods is imperative to prevent the establishment and spread of such destructive pests. Proactive efforts in tackling invasive species are vital to preserving the livelihoods of local farmers and fostering a future of sustainable agriculture. Delaying intervention only allows these invasive populations to grow, exacerbating their negative effects on our ecosystem and agricultural productivity.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union

**LATE**

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 6:09:18 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lilah Shapiro	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

**My name is Lilah Shapiro, and I was raised in Puna, Hawai‘i. I work with Liko Nā Pilina, a forest restoration project through UH Hilo, where my focus is on the Queensland longhorn beetle and the use of nematodes as a biological control.**

**I am writing to urge you to support HB 2139 to provide funding for projects addressing the growing threat posed by the Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) in Hawai‘i. QLB targets many agriculturally important plants, including ‘ulu, cacao, avocado, and citrus, as well as culturally significant trees such as kukui. Its continued spread across East Hawai‘i is causing increasing damage to local farms, forests, and community spaces.**

**As a result of QLB larvae burrowing into mature plants like cacao and citrus, farmers in East Hawai‘i are facing increased crop losses, higher management costs, and severe damage to or death of established crop plants. As the range of QLB rapidly expands, it poses a growing threat to food producers across Hawai‘i and must be addressed urgently.**

**These islands are incredibly special places, home to an extraordinary amount of biodiversity. Within my own lifetime, I have watched invasive species spread and overwhelm our fragile ecosystems. While it can feel like we are already too late to stop many invasives, that is not the case with QLB. We still have a chance to act—and we know what works.**

**This bill will allow researchers at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo to continue research on the effectiveness of nematodes as a biocontrol for QLB. This biocontrol offers an opportunity to be proactive about managing QLB populations before it spreads to other islands and causes widespread devastation like we have seen with the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle. *Heterorhabditis indica*, a local strain of nematode originally collected in Hilo Bay sands, has been shown by USDA ARS to successfully reduce populations of QLB in tropical orchard crops. Many farmers applying this biocontrol have seen the health of their trees improve. Preliminary results from our pilot study at UH Hilo in 2025 show that nematode application reduced or completely eliminated QLB infection in 74% of kukui and 80% of ‘ulu trees. For such a novel biocontrol effort, these results are extremely promising.**

**I have seen firsthand the devastating impact QLB has had on our forests. At the Liko Nā Pilina restoration site, many canopy trees have been lost to QLB, reducing shade and worsening the encroachment of invasive plants. With this nematode treatment, I witnessed**

trees go from being covered in oozing infection and losing all their leaves to completely recovering. It is remarkable to finally have a tool that actually works to fight one of our most destructive invasive pests. The most rewarding part has been working with farmers and community members who have experienced devastating losses from QLB. Seeing their relief when they learn this treatment works underscores just how urgent this crisis has been and how much this solution means to our communities.

However, more research is needed if we hope to control the spread of QLB. HB 2139 would fund research into different methods of applying *H. indica* to infected trees to make application less time-consuming and more effective for land managers while remaining low-cost. This research will contribute to reducing QLB populations in East Hawai'i and support growers in protecting their trees. In addition, a low-cost, effective treatment that is scalable will be extremely valuable if QLB eventually spreads to other islands. Proactive action at the state level will protect the economic vitality of Hawai'i's agricultural sector and reduce long-term costs to local growers.

Taking action against QLB is essential to our environmental health, local food security, and cultural heritage. HB 2139 would make a meaningful difference in our community for generations to come. Mahalo for your commitment to supporting Hawai'i's agricultural communities.



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

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 16, 2026 1:00 PM  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street**

**RE: HB2139HD1 RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES.**

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 House Bill 2139** appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i to conduct a study on effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland Longhorn Beetle

We appreciate any efforts to help strengthen and enforce Biosecurity. The Long Horn Beetle has started to become a concern for our Floriculture Nurserymen and Women. We support this pro-active attempt to conduct a study so we can better understand how to fight and repel this invasive pest.

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



‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai  
**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2139 HD1**  
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES  
Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Ho‘ona‘auao  
Ke Kapikala o Hawai‘i

Malaki 16, 2026

1:00PM

Lumi 229

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Aloha e Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB2139 HD1**, which allocates funding for research to reduce the population of the Queensland longhorn beetle.

The Queensland longhorn beetle (QLB) threatens agriculture, Polynesian canoe crops, and our native forests. First detected in Puna in 2009, QLB has spread to Hilo, the Hāmākua Coast, and Honoka‘a and Āhualoa. QLB threatens both agricultural crops such as cacao, avocado, and citrus as well as the culturally significant ‘ulu and kukui trees, and irreplaceable native species such as alahe‘e. The spread of QLB across Hawai‘i Island follows a concerning pattern of invasive species establishing populations and spreading, becoming difficult and costly to manage, as has occurred statewide with the coconut rhinoceros beetle infestation.

HB2139 HD1 is a needed proactive measure that invests in crucial research to identify effective treatment and control methods for QLB. This research strengthens Hawai‘i’s biosecurity and ensures QLB does not become another catastrophic, statewide infestation like other invasive species. This measure also aligns with longstanding OHA policy to protect Hawai‘i’s natural and cultural resources that are foundational to the continued exercise of a range of traditional and customary practices. Alahe‘e, for example, is traditionally significant for a range of uses from medicine to the decorate arts to fishing and other implements made from the tree’s hardwood. It is also appropriate

for contemporary, drought-resistant landscaping that is crucial for building our resistance to wildfires.

For the reasons stated above, OHA respectfully urges this committee to **PASS HB2139 HD1**.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 2:30:00 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I KĀKO‘O this billl.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 11:06:36 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I strongly support HB 2139 HD1.

We can't ignore this serious threat to ag and watersheds that attacks and kills crops and trees. If we don't invest in research now, this invasive species will continue to spread and destroy forests and diminish food production. The longer we wait, the less chance we have to control it.

Thank you.

**LATE**

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 9:30:37 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sherry Pollack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Invasive species present an ongoing, critical threat to the economic viability of Hawaii's agricultural sector, requiring swift, early-stage intervention. Please PASS this important measure.

**LATE**

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 5:52:41 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!! MAHALO!