

**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  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512  
Phone: (808) 973-9560 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026  
2:00 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 308 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2549, HD1  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 2549, House Draft 1 that establishes a Clean Plant Program (CPP) within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to support the production, maintenance, and distribution of disease-free, clean plant material to growers, nurseries, and other agricultural producers in the state and appropriates funds. The Department supports this bill.

The Department is mandated to double local food production by 2030 as per Act 151/2019, and supports the Farm-to-State Local Food Purchasing milestones for 2035, 2040, 2045 and 2050, Hawaii Revised Statutes 27-8 that mandates that a percentage of food purchased for public schools, hospitals and other entities must consist of fresh local agricultural products and local value-added, processed agricultural food products. This bill supports achieving the mandated milestones by providing high quality pathogen free plant materials strengthening local production and biosecurity efforts.

This bill addresses the cost and availability of growing materials – seeds, keiki, saplings - and will kick-start production for beginning farmers and/or farmers wanting to scale up. The purpose of the bill is to establish repositories where reliable seeds and/or starter plants would be produced and distributed to Hawaii agricultural producers. The cost would be discounted in exchange for data from the participating farmers and nursery operations, which will be shared with industry as a resource for planting decisions.

The CPP will help farmers recover from disasters that destroy their crops and homeowners who want to grow food for subsistence. Additionally, CPP will partner with

state agencies that encourage food production and non-profit programs that seek to increase food production.

The Hawaii Clean Plant Initiative would establish repositories located in each county where seeds, plantlets, keiki, and grafts would be available for distribution to farmers, ranchers, and growers. The grow-out would take place at the facility using tissue culture, grafting, and/or method best suited for the commodity and be specific to the microclimate of the area.

The project would begin with varieties that have been successfully propagated in Hawaii:

- Bunchy Top Virus-free and Tolerant Bananas
- Ring Spot Virus Resistant Papaya
- High-yielding okra, mamaki tea, ginger, turmeric, green onion, cilantro, celery
- Taro
- Legumes
- Virus Free Sweet Potato Cuttings

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.



‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2549 HD1**

RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka ‘Oihana ‘Imi Kālā

Ke Kapikala o Hawai‘i

Malaki 3, 2026

2:00PM

Lumi 308

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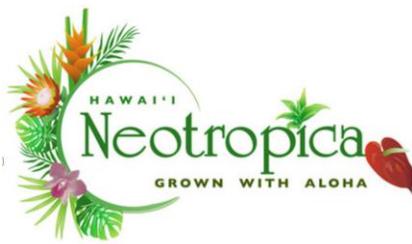
Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB2549 HD1**, which establishes under the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) a Clean Plant Program to distribute disease-free plant material to help address and prevent the spread of devastating invasive species on the front end of the growing process.

Healthy, disease-free plant material is essential to Hawai‘i’s agricultural resilience, food security, and Native Hawaiian food systems. The health of kalo, ‘uala, ‘ulu, mai’a, and other culturally significant crops directly affects subsistence farmers, cultural practitioners, and local food security. The loss of these keystone species to disease or invasive species disrupts cultural practices, the preservation of ‘ike kūpuna, and agricultural productivity.

OHA supports the establishment of a Clean Plant Program that provides diagnostic screening, propagation of healthy and tolerant plants, and distribution of clean plant materials. This program is important for small scale farmers, including many Native Hawaiian farmers, who may lack the resources to test for infestation on the front end, or who may be victim to nurseries and large scale distributors who distribute infested material (as has occurred with Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle) OHA also appreciates the opportunity for further input through the Chapter 91 rulemaking process.

For the reasons stated above, OHA respectfully urges this committee to **PASS HB2549 HD1**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026**

**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Tuesday, March 3, 2026  
2:00 PM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street**

**RE: HB2549 – Relating to Agricultural Production**

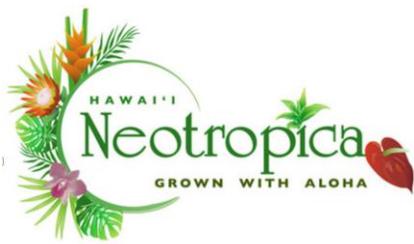
My name is Eric S. Tanouye and I am the President for the Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association. HFNA is a statewide umbrella organization with approximately 350 members. Our membership is made up with breeders, hybridizers, propagators, growers, shippers, wholesalers, retailers, educators, and the allied industry, which supports our efforts in agriculture.

The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS HB2549**, which establishes a Clean Plant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to support the production, maintenance, and distribution of disease-free, clean plant material to growers, nurseries, and other agricultural producers in the State.

This bill is strongly needed in Hawaii for our Agriculture to be able to export our goods throughout the state, to the mainland and to the world. This will help to provide our industry to be able to ship pest and disease free products. We would be able to meet the standards necessary for shipping.

The floriculture industry understands the impact and problems that are caused by invasive species and how they can negatively affect our industry, environment, and community. That is why it is important that we do our part in the ongoing battle against invasive pests, a problem that needs an “all hands on deck” approach. We need to have pest management systems available to protect our environment and those we share our products with.

There are no easy answers to pest and disease control and our best option is to always start with clean material. Clean plant programs allows us to start with growing material that is effectively a ‘clean slate’ where we can control pests and disease at a fresh starting point. We are able to control the growing environment and have pest/disease management that is preventive, instead of reactive to a breakout. This also allows our industry to focus on growing quality products with high yields.



We would like to see agriculture continue as a viable industry in Hawaii and believe this grant program is a good investment into Hawaii's future.

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

# The Hawai'i Reforestation Policy Hui



March 3, 2026

Hawai'i State Legislature  
House Committee on Finance

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2549, HD1, Relating to Agricultural Production

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Reforestation Policy Hui, a coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to forest stewardship, ecological restoration, mālama 'āina, and sustainable land use in Hawai'i, we are writing in support of HB 2549, HD1, relating to agricultural production. This measure establishes a Clean Plant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to produce and distribute disease-free plant material to agricultural producers statewide, requires legislative reporting, and appropriates funds to support the program.

Healthy forests and agricultural systems are closely linked and vital to Hawai'i's environmental and economic resilience. Forested watersheds protect freshwater resources, stabilize soils, reduce wildfire risk, and support biodiversity, while also sustaining productive agricultural lands. Restoration and agroforestry efforts—including the cultivation of native and culturally important species such as koa, 'iliahi, maile, and māmaki—help restore degraded landscapes, strengthen local economies, and support long-term climate adaptation.

Access to high-quality, disease-free plant material is fundamental to the success of these efforts. Expanding clean nursery capacity helps prevent the spread of pests and pathogens, improves plant survival, and strengthens both agricultural production and reforestation initiatives. Investments in biosecure nursery infrastructure support land stewardship, protect natural resources, and create local workforce and economic opportunities.

HB 2549, HD1, represents an important step toward strengthening Hawai'i's agricultural and restoration systems by supporting coordinated investment in plant health and production capacity. These efforts will help ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience of Hawai'i's landscapes.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.



Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

**HB2549**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 2:00 PM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB2549 HD 1** which establishes a Clean Plant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to support the production, maintenance, and distribution of disease-free, clean plant material to growers, nurseries, and other agricultural producers in the State.

We support this measure to establish a program that prioritizes inspection of plant material for invasive species and propagating disease-free plant material within the state. This is a step in the right direction – to minimize the importation of plant material to the state, which will also reduce the chances of introducing invasive species and diseases. Invasive species cause immense economical burden on agricultural producers who already struggle to carve out a thin profit margin. Invasive pests like the Two-lined Spittlebug are transported in soil and plant material and it should become common biosecurity practice to inspect and clean all material and vehicles, especially if it is coming from an infested area.

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





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

March 3, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**TESTIMONY ON HB 2549, HD1**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference  
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, 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 2549, HD1**, which establishes a Clean Plant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to support the production, maintenance, and distribution of disease-free, clean plant material for growers, nurseries, and other agricultural producers in the State.

Having access to clean plant material, effective agricultural treatments, diagnostics, and pest management tools is a critical component of Hawai'i's biosecurity system. Clean plant material allows producers to begin production with a clean slate, reducing the risk of introducing pests and diseases into farms, fields, and ranches, and minimizing the spread of contaminants to other crops and operations.

Clean plant programs also help ensure that Hawai'i's agricultural industry can ship and provide pest- and disease-free plants and products. This is essential not only for protecting local farms, but also for maintaining consumer confidence and meeting regulatory and market requirements. Once crops are established, continued access to diagnostics and pest management tools is necessary to maintain plant health and productivity over time.

Access to clean plant materials enables farmers to increase production, improve yields, and expand operations with greater confidence. In a state where pests and diseases can spread rapidly and where production costs are already high, preventing problems before they start is far more effective and economical than responding after an outbreak occurs.

Invasive species continue to pose one of the greatest threats to Hawai'i's agricultural sector. Each year, new pests and diseases are introduced, placing farmers and ranchers at risk and undermining the State's goals of increasing local food production and self-sufficiency. A well-supported Clean Plant Program is a proactive investment that strengthens Hawai'i's broader biosecurity efforts and supports long-term agricultural viability.

HB 2549, HD1 represents a sound investment in agriculture and provides meaningful support to farmers, nurseries, and agricultural producers across the State. By establishing this program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, the State can help protect existing agricultural operations, encourage responsible expansion, and reinforce Hawai'i's commitment to strong biosecurity practices.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Date of Hearing: March 3, 2026

To: Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance

Subject: **HB2549 HD1**, Relating to Agricultural production

Aloha,

Hawai'i Food + Policy strongly **supports HB2549 HD1**, which establishes a Clean Plant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

HB2549 HD1 creates a vital framework to obtain, diagnostically screen, propagate, and distribute disease-free plant material to growers, nurseries, and agricultural producers statewide. By ensuring plant materials from both within and outside the State are free of harmful insects and diseases before they reach our fields, this bill provides the preventative approach necessary to strengthen Hawai'i's agricultural foundation and protect against catastrophic crop loss.

We recently saw firsthand the impact of the coconut rhinoceros beetle across O'ahu. Once an invasive pest becomes established, the response is costly and labor-intensive. This bill shifts Hawai'i toward a proactive strategy. Beyond just distribution, the program is mandated to optimize production processes and assess the program's economic impact, ensuring that we are investing wisely in prevention rather than just reacting to the next crisis.

We also appreciate the bill's commitment to collaboration and accountability. It allows the Department to partner with agricultural research institutions, growers, and nurseries to develop the program.

Hawai'i cannot afford to remain in crisis mode regarding agricultural biosecurity. HB2549 HD1 positions our state to prevent problems before they occur, protecting our local food system and the livelihoods of our producers.

For these reasons, Hawai'i Food + Policy respectfully urges your support of HB2549 HD1.

Mahalo,

Brandon Kinard & the Food+ Policy Team  
#fixourfoodsystem

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**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.

**HB-2549-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 7:05:53 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT!!! MAHALO!

**HB-2549-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 1:45:58 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in **strong support** of HB2549, which establishes a Clean Plant Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to support the production, maintenance, and distribution of disease-free, clean plant material to growers, nurseries, and other agricultural producers across our state.

**Why This Program Is Essential**

Hawai‘i's unique isolation has given us an agricultural heritage found nowhere else, but that same isolation makes us extraordinarily vulnerable to plant diseases and pests. Once an invasive pathogen or insect becomes established in our islands, eradication is often impossible, and control becomes a permanent, expensive burden.

The Legislature has recognized this reality repeatedly in recent years. In 2022, lawmakers noted that existing State-owned plant quarantine facilities were "unable to mitigate the demand for disease-resistant stock" and that increasing capacity was essential to protect growers. In 2024, the Department of Agriculture's biosecurity program received strong support from a coalition including the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, County of Maui, Hawai‘i Farm Bureau, Hawai‘i Floriculture and Nursery Association, and many others who understood that "pre-entry measures, port-of-entry inspections, post-entry measures, and other programs help protect the State from the introduction and spread of harmful pests."

HB2549 builds on this foundation by creating a dedicated Clean Plant Program focused on one of the most effective biosecurity strategies: ensuring that the plant material entering our agricultural system is itself free from disease.

**What a Clean Plant Program Does**

The Clean Plant Program would support the production, maintenance, and distribution of disease-free, clean plant material. This is not simply a convenience for growers—it is a critical line of defense.

When farmers plant material that is already infected or infested, they introduce problems into their fields that may take years to detect and even longer to control. Coffee leaf rust, which

devastated Hawai‘i Island coffee production when it arrived in 2020, spread in part through the movement of infected plant material. The response required emergency rules restricting movement of coffee plants and a search for rust-resistant varieties—a search that was hampered by inadequate quarantine and clean stock infrastructure.

A Clean Plant Program addresses this vulnerability at its source. By providing growers with verified disease-free material, we reduce the risk of introducing pathogens through the very act of planting. This benefits not only individual farmers but entire agricultural sectors and the ecosystems that border production areas.

## **The Statutory Framework**

The Department of Agriculture is already mandated under Hawai‘i Revised Statutes §150A-53 to implement biosecurity measures, including establishing parameters for facilities that ensure the safety of agricultural commodities. The Department's Plant Industry Division plays a critical role in inspecting imports and regulating the movement of plant material to prevent the establishment of harmful pests.

HB2549 provides the specific programmatic authority and resources needed to make clean plant material a reality. It operationalizes a concept that has been discussed in previous legislative sessions—including SB479 in 2021, which sought to develop a program to safely distribute disease- and insect-free tropical plant materials to Hawai‘i farmers—and gives it dedicated funding and focus.

## **Benefits Across Sectors**

The benefits of a Clean Plant Program extend across Hawai‘i's agricultural landscape:

- **Commercial growers** receive planting stock free from viruses and pests, reducing crop losses and pesticide dependence.
- **Nurseries** can offer customers healthier plants with greater confidence.
- **Backyard growers and home gardeners** gain access to material that won't introduce problems into their communities.
- **The broader public** is protected from new pest introductions that could threaten native ecosystems and agricultural lands.

## **A Proactive Investment**

Biosecurity is often described as an insurance policy—money spent today to avoid catastrophic costs tomorrow. The coffee leaf rust experience is instructive: a single introduction has cost farmers millions in lost production and ongoing management expenses. A Clean Plant Program is a fraction of those costs and prevents the next introduction before it occurs.

The program also supports economic development. When Hawai‘i growers have access to clean, high-quality planting material, they can produce more reliably, compete more effectively, and

invest with confidence. Our agricultural sector cannot thrive if farmers are constantly battling diseases introduced through their own planting stock.

HB2549 is a forward-looking investment in the health and resilience of Hawai'i's agriculture. It addresses a critical gap in our biosecurity infrastructure and provides growers with the tools they need to succeed. I urge this committee to pass HB2549 and establish the Clean Plant Program as a permanent part of our agricultural protection system.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.