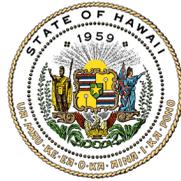


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

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**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

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

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2098 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.

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.



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

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

**Wednesday, February 18, 2026
9:30 AM
Conference Room 332 & 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.

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,

Eric S. Tanouye
President

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association



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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 2549
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

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 2549, 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 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.



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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 the intent of HB2549.**

Access to disease-free planting material is essential to crop productivity, biosecurity, and long-term food security. Reliable clean stock strengthens local production, supports invasive species control, and improves the resilience of Hawai'i's agricultural sector. Ensuring farmers have timely access to high-quality, pathogen-free material is a critical investment in the stability and competitiveness of local agriculture.

However, there is concern about potential duplication of existing work conducted by the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) at the University of Hawai'i, which already provides plant diagnostics, pathology expertise, and clean plant research.

To avoid fragmentation of limited expertise and public resources, the bill should require formal coordination between the department and CTAHR through memoranda of agreement, clarify that the program will build upon, not replicate, existing efforts, and require annual reporting on collaboration and measurable outcomes.

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 Members of the House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

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

Aloha,

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

HB2549 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 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.

Mahalo,

Brandon Kinard & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

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

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 12:39:03 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
penny levin	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha;

A clean plant program can be beneficial to local farmers. I have two concerns regarding this bill.

1)The bill states that plants may be brought in from outside Hawaii but doesn't not include a clause requiring such plants to be reviewed for invasiveness prior to entry. Please add language that aligns with the biosecurity bills moving through this year's legislature and requires species or cultivars being considered for entry into the clean plant program to a) be evaluated for invasiveness, and b) rejected by the program if the plants do not meet such biosecurity criteria.

2) Clean plants will only be a momentary fix for farmers and nursery growers. The program should include, or partner with a program that focuses on helping farmers and nurseries improve sanitation protocols and practices, and soil health. Without it, we are just putting clean plants back into infected soils or nurseries.

mahalo for the opportunity to comment.

HB-2549

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 6:14:24 PM

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

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2549 HB RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

HB-2549

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:29:27 AM

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

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

Comments:

SUPPORT