

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
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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 HOUSE AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026

9:30 AM

CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2551
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 2551, relating to agriculture. This measure appropriates funds for the Area-Wide Fruit Fly Suppression Program. The Department supports this measure.

Fruit flies are one of the most destructive pests in the State, attacking hundreds of plant species, with many plants being crops of economic significance. With their broad host range, the allocation of funds for this program would enable the Department to begin reducing fruit fly populations, lessening crop impacts. Depending on the program's success, this could be one way to increase local agricultural production and food sustainability in the State. Increased yields could also help local producers be more cost competitive with similar imported goods, further reducing the State's reliance on imports.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience

and

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 2551 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony offering comments on HB 2551 which appropriates funds for the Area-Wide Fruit Fly Suppression Program to be expended by the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) respectfully offers the following comments. Fruit flies pose a pervasive threat to over 300 host species, driving up food costs and threatening Hawai'i's goal of food self-sufficiency. The key challenge in controlling fruit flies is that maggots live inside fruit and adults are highly mobile for which standard pesticide spraying is ineffective and impractical for residential areas. Effective area-wide suppression requires a long-term approach that combines sanitation such as removing fallen fruit, use of specialized tools like protein baits, male lures, and the release of sterile insects. CTAHR has organized a coordinated effort involving experts, farmers, and State and federal partners to monitor pest levels, update control techniques and launch public outreach campaigns. The appropriation in HB 2551 will support statewide community assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



**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: HB2551 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

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 2551** which Appropriates funds for the Area-Wide Fruit Fly Suppression Program.

We appreciate these efforts to help strengthen and enforce our Biosecurity program through the implementation of an Area-Wide Fruit Fly Suppression program.

Proper education and techniques to control pests is always useful to our growers and environment. Biosecurity is an ever evolving and constant battle to keep pests and diseases under control.

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



MAUI COUNTY FARM BUREAU

PO Box 148, Kula, HI 96790
mauicountyfarmbureau.org

Testimony

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

February 18, 2026
9:30 AM
Conference Room 325

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

Maui County Farm Bureau on behalf of our farm families and organizations strongly supports HB2551, appropriating funds for the Area-wide fruitfly suppression program.

Hawaii is known for pickled peach, mango and other green fruits. Unlike the continent, where ripe fruits are the norm, Hawaii created ways to enjoy green fruits ahead of fruitfly damage making fruits inedible. In the early 2000s, USDA-ARS funded a major initiative to address this major problem. USDA partnered with UH-CTAHR and HDOA. It was not just a research program but a major community initiative recognizing that any one farmer could not manage fruitflies on their property but that it required a community effort to address the issue. It's major funding was allocated to outreach within the entire community -- not just farmers but those areawide to participate in the management of fruitflies. The initiative proved to be tremendously successful, serving as an example worldwide. On Maui, damage up to 90% in its' most severe cases, dropped to less than 5%.

Table 4. Estimated net benefit to a persimmon farmer applying the suppression programme (Adapted from Table 9, McGregor 2004, unpublished report).

Benefits from applying the suppression programme	
<i>Increased revenue</i>	USD/hectare
Before adoption of the programme, marketable production 771 kilogram (50% grade 1; 50% grade 2)	
grade 1 386 kilogram at each USD 4.44/kg	4231
grade 2 386 kilogram at each USD 2/kg	1907
After adoption of the programme, marketable production 998 kilogram (70% grade 1; 30% grade 2)	
grade 1 699 kilogram at each USD 4.44/kg	7667
grade 2 299 kilogram at each USD 2/kg	1477
Total	9144
Total increase in revenue	3006
<i>Reduction in harvesting and sorting cost per kilogramme</i>	
Harvesting with < 5% damage estimated eight hours to harvest 454 kilogram	
Harvesting with 35% damage estimated 11 hours to harvest 454 kilogram	
Savings per 454 kilogram is three hours - for 998 kilogram the gain in labor efficiency is 6.6 hours at each USD 6/hour	131
Total	131
<i>Previous cost of applying cover insecticide spray</i>	
Cover spray application of insecticide during fruiting season (Malathion, Nulure)	
Materials -7.58 litres each)	247
Labour for application 60 hours	1152
Total	1433
Total Benefit	4570

Mau, R.F.L, E.B. Jang, R.I. Vargas Hawaii Area-wide Fruit Fly Management Programme: Influence of Partnerships and a Good Education Programme

One may ask what happened? If the project was so successful, why didn't it just continue. The end of federal funding coincided to the beginning of the Reduction in Force budget shortfalls with major State staffing reductions. Successful areawide suppression requires participation by all those within the selected area, thus preventing pests from invading from untreated areas into treated areas. Population changes, new landowners result in entities unfamiliar with the program not taking action and thereby resulting in fruitfly population surges. Due to these changes fruitflies have again gotten out of control. Nearly 100% damage from melon flies on zucchini was observed on Maui in 2023. Subsequent work by CTAHR identified a new bait and helped manage the pest but constant vigilance is needed and it is only with expansion to an areawide program that the full benefits are realized. It also demonstrated the need for timely research to identify baits and lures due to lack of long term effectiveness of any one product.

This funding request seeks to reinstate the original areawide program. It is timely due to the demand for increase in local production of fruits and cucurbits to meet the demand of legislative initiatives such as the Farm to School Program.

This initiative should also be seen as a model with its' practices transferable to other insect pests such as the coconut rhinoceros beetle that impact across property boundaries. It is a systematic initiative to educate and involve everyone within a given area for suppression of a pest. The initiative is also expected to better establish a long term plan to wean off government funding and become part of a community initiative surviving the test of time.

MCFB respectfully requests your strong support of HB2551, recognizing Areawide Pest management as a critical component in Hawaii's Biosecurity Plan.



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February 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 2551
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 2551, which appropriates funds to support an area-wide fruit fly suppression program.

Fruit flies remain one of the most significant and persistent agricultural pests in Hawai'i. They directly impact fruit and vegetable production, reduce marketable yields, increase production costs, and limit diversification opportunities for local farmers. Hawai'i's continued federal fruit fly quarantine also restricts export potential and creates additional compliance burdens for producers.

Area-wide suppression programs have demonstrated success in reducing infestation levels and improving crop quality by using coordinated, science-based pest management strategies that integrate multiple tools and approaches. These programs help farmers manage pests more effectively and efficiently across entire growing regions. Such coordinated efforts are far more effective than isolated treatment at the individual farm level. By investing in an area-wide strategy, the State strengthens agricultural productivity, supports diversified farming operations, and enhances long-term food security.

HB 2551 represents a practical and necessary investment in Hawai'i's agricultural infrastructure. Continued suppression efforts will benefit growers across multiple islands and commodities while strengthening long-term pest management capacity statewide.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this measure.



Date of Hearing: 18 February, 2026

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

Subject: **HB2551**, Relating to Agriculture

Aloha,

Hawai'i Food+ Policy is writing in **support of HB2551** which appropriates funds for the Area-Wide Fruit Fly Suppression Program.

The fruit fly federal quarantine that exists today due to the presence of fruit flies in the State and their threat to the continental United States' agricultural sector, is a major hindrance to the State's expansion of diversified agriculture and ability to export product. For the last 114 years, Hawai'i has been subject to a federal agricultural quarantine that impacts Hawai'i-based farms to the tune of \$760 million annually. That's greater than the value of Hawai'i's total agricultural sales in 2022 (which was \$673 million).¹

The species of fruit fly being introduced to Hawai'i have no natural predators so intervention is necessary to mitigate impacts. In 1999, the United States Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Research Service (ARS) funded a five-year area-wide fruit fly pest management system. The area-wide fruit fly program used a combined approach of *field sanitation, protein bait sprays, and male-lure traps* to combat fruit fly infestations. The program successfully lowered infestation rates to below five per cent for many crops, increasing yields and marketable products, and significantly reduced insecticide use in some areas.

With the ability to encourage the expansion of local diversified agriculture, increase future earnings potential for our local producers, reduce the cost of maintenance/production, and increase our food systems resiliency against invasive pests, we support the additional appropriation of funds to continue efforts initiated through Act 231, SLH 2024, and urge the committee to pass HB2551.

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

[1] Hawai'i Food Alliance. (n.d.). *Hawai'i's federal quarantine: A century-old barrier to agricultural growth*. Hawai'i Food.
<https://hawaiifood.com/articles/hawaiis-federal-quarantine-a-century-old-barrier-to-agricultural-growth/>

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-2551

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 12:21:13 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:

As a farmer I have benefitted from the fruit fly bait program. I believe it is important to reinstate the program, however, the bill lacks clarity about how one million dollars will be used, and implies that it will go to an existing contract with UH to "evaluating the ARS's 1999 protocols, methods, and chemicals, and to update them to meet current needs" and not necessarily towards actually fruit fly bait production and distribution to growers.

A good assessment of the original program and recommendations for improvement shouldn't cost more than \$50,000; perhaps \$100,000 if you add the painfully high administrative overhead at UH. I would suggest clarification in the bill regarding what the million dollars can/will be used for and some clearly outlined goals and outcomes.

Mahalo.

HB-2551

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 6:13:47 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

2551 HB RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

HB-2551

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:14:10 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mae Nakahata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This measure is critical for management of fruiflies currently limiting increased local production of curcurbits and fruits needed to implement other legislative initiatives such as the school lunch program. Legacy crops such as persimmons are also impacted. The program can also can serve as a blueprint for other pests such as the two lined spittle bug and rhinoceros beetle . PESTS DON'T RESPECT PROPERTY BOUNDARIES, REQUIRING A COMMUNITY SOLUTION AND NOT JUST A FARM ACTION a key concept of area wide pest management.

Please advance HB2551 relating to Areawide Pest Management as a critical element for successful biosecurity program in Hawai'i.

Thank you.

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2551

Relating to Funding for the Hawaii Area-Wide Fruit Fly Program

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 2551 and the proposed \$1 million appropriation for the Hawaii Area-Wide Fruit Fly Program.

Fruit flies remain one of the most economically significant constraints to diversified agriculture in Hawaii. They reduce marketable yield, increase production costs, restrict export opportunities, and undermine efforts to expand local food production. Effective suppression directly improves farmer profitability, strengthens supply chains, and supports the State's broader food security goals.

I offer this testimony from direct professional experience. In 1999, I was one of the key contributors to the original USDA Area-Wide Fruit Fly Program in Hawaii. That effort developed into an eight-year federally supported initiative funded at several million dollars annually. While initially envisioned as a shorter program, it was extended because of demonstrated success. Economic analyses conducted during that period indicated significant net benefits to Hawaiian agriculture through improved crop quality, reduced losses, expanded market access, and decreased reliance on pesticides.

The key to that success was managing fruit flies at the landscape level rather than on a farm-by-farm basis. Because fruit flies move freely across property boundaries, suppression efforts must operate at the ecological scale at which the pest exists. Coordinated regional action reduced reinfestation cycles and improved long-term outcomes.

The program's effectiveness depended heavily on the scientific leadership and technology provided by USDA Agricultural Research Service (USDA ARS), which supplied the research foundation, monitoring systems, and integrated pest management tools necessary for implementation. Success also required strong collaboration among federal partners, the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, the University of Hawaii, producers, and community stakeholders. Public education and participation were essential components, ensuring that backyard host plants did not undermine commercial suppression efforts.

The \$1 million requested in House Bill 2551 represents an important and appreciated investment. However, area-wide pest suppression is not a one-time intervention. It requires sustained, multi-year commitment to maintain gains and prevent resurgence. Based on prior experience, continuity of funding over several years will significantly enhance the program's return on investment and provide measurable economic benefits to the State's agricultural sector.

In the context of agricultural resilience, food security, and economic diversification, this appropriation should be viewed as a strategic investment rather than a short-term expenditure. Continued and potentially extended funding in future fiscal years would allow the program to achieve durable, statewide impact.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge strong support for House Bill 2551 and consideration of sustained funding in the years ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Jang

Fruit Fly Systems Applied Technologies