

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2561 HD1
RELATING TO FERAL ANIMALS**

REPRESENTATIVE DAVID A. TARNAS, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Hearing Date, Time: **2/18/2026, 2:00 P.M.** Room Number: **325**

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (“Department”) requests that this measure be
2 considered as a vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the
3 priorities and requests outlined in the Governor’s executive budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department offers **support** for HB2561 HD1.

5 **Department Testimony:** The Environmental Health Services Division (EHSD), Vector Control
6 Branch (VCB), provides the following comments on behalf of the Department.

7 The Department of Health (Department) supports HB2561 HD1, which designates feral
8 chickens on public lands, in a city with a population of three hundred thousand or more, as a
9 controllable pest for purposes of public health and nuisance prevention. The Department also
10 supports the prohibition of intentional keeping, maintaining, or supporting of feral chickens on
11 state or certain city lands, including by feeding or placing chickens in such areas and
12 abandonment of chickens on public lands or on private property without consent.

13 Feral animals threaten local ecosystems and can transmit diseases affecting both public
14 and environmental health. A reduction in feral animal keeping, maintaining, or supporting,
15 including feeding, should lead to a decrease in feral animal populations. Reducing feral chicken
16 populations in specific circumstances has multiple positive effects; it will reduce the risk of

1 horizontal transmission of avian diseases such as avian influenza, it will reduce the risk of
2 zoonotic transmission to humans, and it will reduce nuisance complaints received by multiple
3 jurisdictions.

4 The Department notes that animal control for the purposes not associated with public
5 health activities such as outbreak containment and response is inconsistent with the
6 Department's mission. Local governmental agencies, landowners, and private sector
7 businesses are often the entities which are most appropriate to provide the pest control related
8 to this bill.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

10

11 **Offered Amendments:** None.

12 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

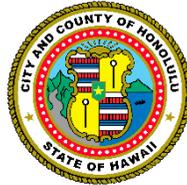
**DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA LAWELawe KUPA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

RICK BLANGIARDI
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KIMBERLY M. HASHIRO
DIRECTOR
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MEGAN JOHNSON
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February 17, 2026

The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol, Conference Room 325
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs:

SUBJECT: H.B. No. 2561, H.D. 1 - Relating To Feral Animals
HEARING: Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 2:00 p.m.

The City and County of Honolulu, Department of Customer Services (CSD), appreciates the opportunity to testify in **support** of H.B. No. 2561, H.D. 1, which would add a new chapter to the Hawaii Revised Statutes regarding feral chickens.

In addition to administering the City's feral chicken mitigation contracts that support humane capture and disposal services, CSD's Customer Care section serves as the primary point of contact for public complaints related to feral chickens. These complaints frequently involve excessive noise, sanitation issues, attraction of other pests, and impacts to public facilities and neighborhood quality of life.

H.B. No. 2561, H.D. 1 provides important statutory clarity by designating feral chickens on public lands as a controllable pest for purposes of public health and nuisance prevention. The measure strengthens existing local rules by prohibiting the feeding, abandonment, or intentional support of feral chickens on public lands or private property, including feeding or placing chickens in such areas, and establishing clear enforcement authority and civil penalties. The bill complements existing county practices and does not expand enforcement beyond current roles.

Testimony for H.B. No. 2561, H.D. 1
February 17, 2026
Page 2

While the measure does not include an appropriation, the clear standards and enforcement tools established by H.B. No. 2561, H.D. 1 support more consistent, coordinated, and humane management of feral chickens on public lands and private property.

For these reasons, CSD **supports** H.B. No. 2561, H.D. 1 and appreciates the Legislature's consideration of this practical and targeted approach to addressing an ongoing public nuisance issue.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. No. 2561, H.D. 1.

Sincerely,

for Kimberly M. Hashiro
Director

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 2:17:16 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cathy Goeggel	Animal Rights Hawai'i	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We continue to oppose HB2561, even with the amendments added by the Ag Committee. People who really hate chickens will consider it a carte blanche for a wholesale slaughter. If poisons are used, native and endangered birds could be at risk. Who will enforce the law? DLNR has always been trigger happy dealing with animal control. There is a chemosterilant - Ornitrol, which has been successfully used on the mainland and elsewhere. Please choose humane population control. Please table HB2561. Mahalo!



Trooper's Chicken Rescue
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To: Hawai'i House of Representatives
and Governor Green

February 16, 2026

Written Testimony of Trooper's Chicken Rescue
In Opposition to H.B. 2561 H.D.1 With a Call for Strategic Partnership

Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Trooper's Chicken Rescue, mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. 2561 H.D.1 and for your continued work addressing the complex challenges surrounding Hawaii's feral chicken population.

Trooper's Chicken Rescue is a Hawai'i nonprofit dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and lifelong sanctuary of chickens across the Hawaiian Islands, including birds from feral populations, abandonment, neglect, and cockfighting situations. Our mission is rooted in compassion, education, and community collaboration to advance compassionate and sustainable solutions for both animals and communities.

We share the Legislature's goals of reducing nuisance concerns, improving sanitation, and supporting safe public spaces. However, we respectfully oppose H.B. 2561 H.D.1 as currently drafted because it relies primarily on enforcement mechanisms without establishing the structural framework necessary to achieve long term population reduction. In its current form, the measure risks shifting the visibility of the issue rather than resolving the underlying drivers.

Organizational Perspective and On the Ground Experience

Trooper's Chicken Rescue operates as an animal welfare, advocacy, and educational organization responding to abandoned, feral, and abused chickens, including those impacted by cockfighting and overpopulation. Our work includes rescue and intake, medical rehabilitation, permanent sanctuary, limited adoption placements, and community education programs.

Through this work, we see firsthand that feral chicken populations are driven primarily by abandonment, breeding cycles, displacement, and cruelty related dumping rather than by community feeding alone. Policies that do not address these drivers are unlikely to produce measurable long-term reductions.





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Policy Concerns With the Current Approach

While H.B. 2561 seeks to address legitimate public concerns, its emphasis on prohibition and penalties does not sufficiently account for the biological, behavioral, and social factors that sustain feral populations.

Without coordinated intake capacity, rehabilitation pathways, prevention strategies, and compassionate placement options, enforcement centered approaches can unintentionally displace animals into new areas while placing additional strain on limited community resources. Additionally, while the bill includes funding to facilitate the collection of chickens that have already been caught, it does not establish a comprehensive framework for the subsequent care, rehabilitation, or placement of those animals. Without this continuity of care, collection efforts alone cannot achieve durable outcomes.

The Importance of Addressing Cruelty and Cockfighting

Any meaningful strategy must acknowledge the role of organized cockfighting and related cruelty as a significant contributor to feral populations. Birds are frequently bred, injured, discarded, or released when no longer profitable, creating a continuous pipeline of animals entering the environment.

Trooper's Chicken Rescue actively collaborates with community partners to support compassionate outcomes for birds rescued from these situations and to promote public awareness about the harmful impacts of cockfighting on animals and communities. Without addressing these systemic contributors, policy interventions risk addressing symptoms rather than causes.

Operational Reality and Structural Capacity

Trooper's Chicken Rescue has developed a comprehensive operational framework including quarantine procedures, veterinary partnerships, biosecurity protocols, and structured intake processes designed to ensure compassionate care and public health safeguards.

Our organization has established governance structures, operational plans, and partnerships necessary to support expanded population management efforts. The primary constraint to scaling this work is access to appropriate agricultural or conservation zoned land necessary to operate a full capacity sanctuary environment.





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Secure land access is foundational to expanding intake capacity, supporting long term sanctuary, and creating coordinated response systems capable of absorbing displaced animals. Without addressing this structural component, enforcement driven strategies will continue to outpace available compassionate infrastructure.

Organizational Credentials

Trooper's Chicken Rescue operates under a formal governance structure with a Board of Directors providing oversight, strategic direction, and financial accountability. The organization maintains policies governing ethics, financial oversight, conflict of interest, and operational transparency to ensure responsible stewardship of resources and public trust.

Our operational plan includes veterinary partnerships, collaboration with community organizations, education programs, and coordination with law enforcement efforts addressing cockfighting and animal cruelty.

We are committed to measurable outcomes, responsible governance, and collaborative engagement with public agencies and community stakeholders.

Recommendations for a Comprehensive Path Forward

Trooper's Chicken Rescue respectfully recommends that lawmakers pause and work collaboratively with rescue organizations and subject matter experts to develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses both immediate concerns and long-term population dynamics.

We respectfully propose consideration of the following:

- Establish a formal working group including rescue organizations, animal welfare experts, agricultural stakeholders, and public agencies
- Develop a coordinated intake and rehabilitation framework to ensure continuity of care for animals collected through government efforts
- Incorporate prevention strategies addressing abandonment, breeding pipelines, and cruelty related dumping
- Provide support for compassionate infrastructure including sanctuary capacity and veterinary response systems
- Recognize access to appropriately zoned land as a critical component of sustainable population management
- Establish data collection and reporting mechanisms to evaluate outcomes and guide policy refinement
- Strengthen collaboration with nonprofit partners already engaged in rescue, education, and community outreach





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A Request for Partnership

Trooper's Chicken Rescue stands ready to serve as a constructive partner in developing thoughtful, evidence informed policy solutions. We believe Hawai'i has an opportunity to lead with a balanced approach that protects public health, reduces community conflict, and reflects our shared values of compassion and stewardship.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to return to the drawing board with community partners to craft a strategic framework that produces durable, measurable outcomes rather than temporary displacement.

Closing

Mahalo for your leadership and for your willingness to engage with community partners on this important issue. We welcome continued dialogue and collaboration to ensure that future policy reflects both practical realities and shared values.

"Lasting solutions are not built through enforcement alone, but through partnership, compassion, and the shared responsibility to address root causes together."

Respectfully,
Trooper's Chicken Rescue
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February 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY ON HB 2561, HD1
RELATING TO FERAL ANIMALS

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe, 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 2561, HD1, which establishes a framework to address feral chicken populations on public lands in cities with a population of three hundred thousand or more.

Feral chickens remain a persistent issue across the state, particularly in agricultural areas, where they damage crops, spread weeds, attract pests, and pose public health and safety concerns. HFB has consistently supported reasonable and practical efforts to manage feral chicken populations in ways that protect agriculture, communities, and the environment.

HFB appreciates that HB 2561, HD1 focuses on public lands and is intended to complement existing county ordinances rather than impose new regulatory burdens on farmers or agricultural operations. The bill's emphasis on discouraging the feeding, dumping, or intentional support of feral chickens on public lands aligns with the need for responsible, coordinated management and public education. These behaviors often exacerbate feral population growth and shift impacts into neighboring agricultural and residential properties.

At the same time, HFB encourages continued coordination to ensure that feral chicken control efforts are practical, humane, and effectively enforced. Enforcement alone is not sufficient; long-term success will depend on public awareness, consistent application of rules, and adequate resources for implementation.

Hawaii's farmers and ranchers are working to increase local food production and self-sufficiency, but these efforts are undermined when feral animal populations continue to damage crops, infrastructure, and ecosystems. Addressing feral chickens is important for protecting agriculture, public health, and the environment.

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

Animal Law Section
A Section of the Hawai'i State Bar Association



Chair: Savannah Sherman, Esq.
hsbaanimallaw@gmail.com

Aloha Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee and Chair Tarnas,

The Animal Law Section respectfully **opposes** HB2561 HD1. This bill creates more danger to our community than it solves. It increases the risk of violence against animals and humans, takes crucial police resources, and presents new sanitation concerns. Further, promoting animal cruelty goes against our state's cherished cultural value of respect for all beings.

We are grateful for removal of the language authorizing the killing of feral chickens by property owners. However, the bill's designation of chickens as "controllable pests" provides ambiguous language that may be used to authorize the killing of feral chickens by private citizens. On its face, this seems to imply that citizens may take actions they deem reasonable to control chickens, including lethal measures. If true, this would impact not just chickens, but our children and the community as a whole. Children who witness violence towards animals are shown to have adverse social impacts and a heightened risk for future violent behavior.¹ While wild chickens may cause issues, allowing people to freely kill them opens the door for increased violence and harm to the overall community.

Further, creating a prohibition on the feeding of wild chickens will likely result in increased calls to law enforcement with reports of citizens feeding chickens. This will consume police time and resources that could have been spent attending to more pressing matters.

Finally, this bill presents a risk to sanitation and public health. If citizens take the controlling of feral chickens into their own hands, we will have the new issue of the disposal of chicken carcasses. People will also likely be handling chickens and carcasses more frequently than before, which is especially concerning in areas of dense human population. When chickens die naturally, they tend to isolate themselves from others beforehand.² Allowing the killing of chickens will likely result in more carcasses out in the open around areas of human activity.

This testimony represents the views of the Animal Law Section only and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Hawaii State Bar Association as a whole.

Respectfully,

Savannah Sherman, Esq.
Animal Law Section Chair

¹ See Roshni Trehan Ladny, et al., *Traumatized Witnesses: Review of Childhood Exposure to Animal Cruelty*, Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma, Vol. 13, Issue 4, Pg. 527-37 (Jul. 2019).

² See Ashlyn Snyder, et al., *Sickness Behavior in Chickens*, University of Maryland Extension FS-1178 at 4 (Sept. 2021), [https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/publications/89.%20Sickness Behavior in Chickens Extension FS1178.pdf](https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/publications/89.%20Sickness%20Behavior%20in%20Chickens%20Extension%20FS1178.pdf).

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:16:57 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Valéry Atkinson	Rubber Boots Rescue	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Opposition to HB2561, HD1

TO: Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee

FROM: Valéry Atkinson, Founder of Rubber Boots Rescue

MEASURE: HB2561, HD1

POSITION: STRONGLY OPPOSE

Aloha Chair Tarnas and Members of the Committee,

My name is Valéry Atkinson, and I am the founder of **Rubber Boots Rescue**. I founded this organization in memory of my rescues, **Walter and Frankie**, who spent their short lives in pain and fear before finding safety with me. I represent the independent rescuers across our islands who provide a safety net for animals that the State has abandoned.

While I appreciate the previous committee’s attempt to amend this bill, **HB2561 HD1** remains a dangerous piece of legislation that codifies cruelty into our law.

The "Rescue Exemption" is a Bureaucratic Trap The new language in **Section -4(d)** claims to exempt rescue work, but only if it is "approved by the State or city" beforehand. This creates an impossible hurdle for independent rescuers. Does the State have a 24-hour hotline for us to get "approval" before we save a bird from a storm drain or a busy road? Without a clear and immediate process, this "exemption" is just a way to pick and choose which rescuers are allowed to be compassionate.

A Waste of Law Enforcement Resources This bill now specifically tasks the **Police Department** with enforcing chicken-feeding fines. At a time when our communities are facing serious public safety issues, it is irresponsible to ask HPD officers to spend their shifts citing residents for "maintaining" a feral chicken population. We already see systemic indifference when reporting active animal torture; this bill will only make it easier for officers to ignore abuse by labeling the victims as "pests."

The "Defective Date" Proves This Bill is Not Ready The new effective date of **July 1, 3000**, is a clear admission by the previous committee that this measure has deep flaws and is not ready for enactment. I urge this Committee to listen to that signal. We should not be moving forward with a bill that:

- **Strips away legal protections** by classifying birds as "controllable pests".
- **Normalizes violence** for our keiki by treating living beings as disposable nuisances.
- **Ignores the root cause:** the illegal cockfighting industry that fuels this overpopulation.

The Reality of Organized Abuse Just last Sunday, while driving the back roads of Wai‘anae with my father, I saw exactly where our "feral" chicken problem comes from. We passed an operation so organized it looked like a theme park, complete with a professional sign, a lookout tower, and hundreds of roosters tethered to up-coops in a tactical area. We watched as crowds of people exited carrying sacks.

- This wasn't a "nuisance"—it was a large-scale, organized chicken-fighting ring. If animal abuse is this professional and bold in our community, how can the state justify a bill that focuses on fining a rescuer for feeding a bird in a park?

Why HD1 Fails the Judiciary Test:

- **The Wrong Target:** By labeling these birds "controllable pests" (**Section -3**), the state is effectively decriminalizing the cockfighting industry. It punishes the birds for being dumped and punishes rescuers for saving them but does nothing to stop the organized epidemic of abuse.

Conclusion We are ready to work with the State on humane, community-based solutions, but we will not support legislation that makes "pest control" a higher priority than aloha and mercy. I respectfully urge you to **HOLD** HB2561, HD1.

Mahalo,

Valéry Atkinson Founder, Rubber Boots Rescue Waianae, HI (District 45)

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 4:36:00 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tim Streitz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support anything that can be done to address the feral chicken infestation that has occurred across the islands, and this bill allows us to take one more step forward. But the bill should revert back to the original version to also allow for private individuals to efficiently control for feral chickens on their property. You need to take bold action if you want to address the problem. Blanket protections and legal uncertainties perpetuate the problem through inaction.

As for the bill objectives, the problem with the current feral chicken programs on Oahu is that funding has not been allocated to allow 100% free drop-off of caught chickens to be handled by a company, like Humane Society did many years ago. The only way to get this problem under control is to help enable residents to do it themselves without fear of any legal problems, and then also have a proper place to dispose of the chickens.

City and State programs alone can't eradicate this problem, and people doing it themselves for free are not likely to want to pay to drop off their caught chickens, which is why they dump them anywhere else away from their house. This is all wasted energy, because it then requires someone else to go after the same chicken, rather than resulting in a net decrease of the chicken population.

I encourage you to go further in this bill to enable do-it-yourselfers to contribute to eradicating the feral chicken infestations that physically and mentally affect your constituents. For example, authorize anyone to go onto public property to catch feral chickens, and expand the allowable uses of catching chickens on both public and private property (passive trapping is least effective). Strict penalties need to be applied to anyone who interferes with chicken trapping, such as damaging traps. Another key consideration would be for urban areas where chickens cross multiple property lines. Similar to how police can cross over properties in pursuit of a suspect, the same should be authorized for at least pest control companies to make their job more efficient and enable them to focus on active trapping, rather than just passive cage trapping.

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 10:59:19 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Rubin	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I respectfully oppose HB2561 HD1. While I understand the goal of addressing nuisance concerns, I am concerned that this bill is overly broad and could create a policy pathway toward widespread removal of feral chickens from urban areas. Classifying feral chickens on public lands as a “public nuisance and controllable pest” HB2561 HD1 may encourage increasingly aggressive control efforts without clear limits or community input.

Feral chickens are a longstanding and culturally familiar part of many Hawai‘i communities and also provide some pest-control benefits by consuming insects, centipedes, and other pests. These ecological and community considerations should be weighed carefully before adopting broad prohibitions. I am also concerned about the vague language regarding “creating or maintaining areas” that attract chickens, as well as the escalating daily civil penalties, which could lead to inconsistent enforcement or large fines.

I encourage more targeted, evidence-based, and community-informed approaches.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

David

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 5:03:26 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Kakimoto	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to oppose the bill HB2561. Chickens should NOT be classified as pests to be controlled and they have historical connection to our Hawaiian culture if you take the time to read up and study to learn about this. The language you use for this bill is not only confusing but it also sounds like you don't really know what you want either. There is no definition of animal welfare partners to work with and there should be NO involvement from HPD regarding the rescuing of chickens, feeding, or rehabilitating as there are other organizations out there that would welcome the chickens very willingly and do. This bill seems like a knee jerk reaction to some constituents that are grumbling about the stray chickens instead of coming up with some humane and productive solutions. I am very much against this bill and hope that you all will be able to work with the organizations out there (not the Hawai'i Humane Society) to work towards a humane solution.

Sincerely,

Natalie Kakimoto

February 18, 2026

HB2561 HD1: RELATING TO FERAL ANIMALS

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs:

I would like to clarify that I am writing this comment as a private citizen and not in my position as Public Defender for the State of Hawai'i.

At the outset, I would like to recognize the efforts made by Chair Corey Chun, Vice Chair Kusch and the Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems for removing the language in the original version of HB2561 which allowed private property owners to take unspecified means to “humanely control” feral chickens on their property. HB2561 HD1 is a significant improvement over the original version (please see my previously submitted testimony on HB2561 for the February 6, 2026 hearing). However, **I oppose HB2561 for the following reasons.**

1) The “prohibited acts” would adversely affect efforts by private citizens who are involved in the rescue, rehabilitation and relocation of feral chickens

Under HB2561 HD1, “prohibited acts on public land” include feeding or placing food or other attractants on public land. Many persons involved in the rescue, rehabilitation and relocation of chickens (to consenting private property such as farms) as a means of controlling feral chicken populations use baiting to attract the chickens so that the chickens can be secured via nets or traps. Baiting can also be used to catch sick or injured birds so that they can be treated, relocated to private property or humanely euthanized. Pest control companies also use baiting as a technique to draw chickens to traps. In numerous instances, persons have placed food on State or county property (“feeding” or “placing food or other attractants” under the bill) in the course of controlling feral chicken populations. The efforts of these persons who are acting in the interest of the welfare of the chickens and the community should not be discouraged by prohibiting feeding or placing food or other attractants on public land when the intention is not simply to feed the chickens but to work at a solution to the feral chicken issue. At a minimum, an exception should be made for persons engaged in acts which are meant to facilitate the humane control of feral chicken populations.

While HB2561 HD1 exempted “prohibited acts” that are performed for research or rescue purposes, “provided that the act was approved by the State or city before it was performed,” it provides no mechanism by which such approval can be obtained. Rescues often occur at

the spur of the moment, after working hours or on weekends or holidays. It would significantly hamper rescue efforts if rescuers were required to obtain government approval prior to taking action. In addition, there is no process outlined by which such approval can be obtained. I would suggest the following further amendment:

(d) Any act described in subsection (a) that is performed for research or rescue purposes shall be exempt from the prohibitions in subsection (a)[.]; ~~provided that the act was approved by the State or city before it was performed.~~

If the approval provision is not deleted from HB2561 HD1, then there should be a specific procedure by which rescue or research organizations or persons engaged in rescue or research can receive pre-approval for acts performed in for rescue or research, rather than requiring approval for each individual act. To reiterate, this approval process is not preferable as it would hamper or limit individuals or organizations from performing rescues or research pending approval.

2) Involving police departments in the enforcement of alleged “feral chicken” violations is a waste of already limited police resources and will adversely affect public safety.

HB2561 HD 1 assigns the DLNR and police departments to enforce its “prohibited acts on public land.” Police departments are already understaffed and officers are overworked handling matters of public safety. Citations require officers to divert to the scene of an offense, conduct an investigation, including interviewing witnesses, write up reports and then appear in court if the citation is contested. It is a waste of limited police resources and a detriment to public safety to divert officers from critical functions that require police assistance such as investigating serious crimes, enforcing traffic laws that protect drivers and pedestrians, or assisting in emergency situations, to issue a \$250 citation to a senior citizen who is feeding feral chickens at the park.

3) Authorized enforcing agencies must be required, not given the discretion to coordinate with animal welfare partners and public health partners regarding complaint response, education, and humane handling of feral chickens.

There are numerous animal welfare organizations who must be consulted on issues relating to complaint response and the humane handling of feral chickens. For example, in testimony in opposition to HB980 (2025 session), the Hawaiian Humane Society noted that allowing the killing of feral chickens “contradict[ed] the bill’s concern about biosecurity which would be compromised by close contact with chickens ... [and could] increase potential H[5]N1

threats.”¹ Another testifier noted that “[t]he CDC and World Health Organizations recommend biosecurity measures and monitoring, not mass culling, as the primary approach to preventing avian influenza spread in wild bird populations.”

Again, it must be noted that measures such as HB2561 are not universally supported and would not even appear to reflect that the majority of people either want feral chickens to be left alone or that any legislation not involve mass killing or other inhumane methods of control. For example, the Animal Section of the Hawai‘i State Bar Association, the Hawaiian Humane Society, animal rights organizations, veterinarians and community members have all opposed various legislation related to the control of feral chickens.² KHON2 News posted a Facebook link to its story on legislative efforts to control feral chickens. There were 264 comments on the post, the vast majority of which opposed feral chicken controls.³

4) HB2561 HD1 fails to distinguish between feral chickens which are hybrids of jungle fowl and domestic breeds and the culturally significant moa which should not be included in the provisions of the bill.

HB2561 HD1 defines “chicken” as the specific species *Gallus gallus domesticus*. However, it does nothing to clarify how a layperson or even an untrained exterminator or government employee can distinguish between a “feral chicken” which is covered under this bill and other species of fowl that resemble “chickens” but are not subject to be “humanely controlled” under this bill.

¹ While the H5N1 concern is consistently brought up in testimony, no agency or individual has cited any study which confirms that feral chickens have been infected with the disease.

² One common question is why the Legislature has not taken additional measures to control illegal cockfighting. Cockfighters import and export chickens between the Mainland and Hawaiian islands

³ <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14Yne48ho5A/>

For example:



One of these photos is of *Gallus gallus domesticus* the specific species that is covered under HB2561. The other is *Gallus gallus*, the Red Junglefowl that is not covered under this bill. How would anyone other than a trained biologist be expected to make this distinction?⁴

The failure to distinguish between domestic chicken hybrids and the moa has distinct cultural implications. Feral chickens in Hawai'i are either a type of Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*) or “moa” which were brought to the Hawaiian islands by Polynesians around 1200 AD, or a hybridization of the Junglefowl with modern domestic breeds of chickens brought to Hawai'i by European and Western settlers in the late 18th century.⁵ The generally-accepted explanation for the proliferation of chickens in the community is the release of chickens due to the destruction caused by Hurricane Iwa (1982) and Hurricane Iniki (1992). These chickens, many of which were domestic birds, mixed again with the feral population. Although many of the “feral chickens” that are the subject of this bill are these hybrids, the bill does not distinguish between the hybrid stock and the descendants of the moa that were brought to Hawai'i by Polynesians in 1200 AD.

The moa have a place in Hawaiian history and mythology. The land on which the Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center in Waikiki is built was known as Helumoa or “chicken scratch.” Helumoa was “once the seat of Hawaiian nobility, a thriving community famed for its abundance and beauty.”⁶

⁴ The left photo is of *Gallus gallus domesticus* and the right photo is of *Gallus gallus*.

⁵ “Why Are There So Many Wild Chickens in Hawaii?” Scienceinsights (<https://scienceinsights.org/why-are-there-so-many-wild-chickens-in-hawaii/>)

⁶ Groves, M., “Kamehameha Schools Revitalizes One of Waikiki’s Landmarks” Ka’wakiloumoku Pacific Indigenous Institute, Kamehameha Schools (<https://kaiwakiloumoku.ksbe.edu/article/essays-kamehameha-schools-revitalizes-one-of-waikikiis-landmarks>)

One story of how Helumoa came upon its name involves Kākuhihewa, ruling chief of O‘ahu from 1640 to 1660. It is said that the supernatural chicken, Ka‘auhelemaoa, one day flew down from his home in Ka‘au Crater, in Pālolo, and landed at Helumoa. The rooster scratched the dirt at Kākuhihewa’s feet, then disappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as he had appeared. Kākuhihewa immediately ordered his people to plant a coconut tree at the exact site upon which Ka‘auhelemaoa had kicked up the dirt. This tree, which grew to be the tallest in the area, is said to be the parent of what would become an entire grove of coconut trees, and the land became known as Helumoa, ‘chicken scratch’ [3]. This is the same coconut grove that would later be called the King’s Grove, or the Royal Grove, and would be cited in numerous historical accounts for its pleasantness and lush surroundings.[7]

The provisions of HB2561 give no clear and objective means by which laypersons or non-experts can distinguish between “feral chickens” which may be “humanely controlled” and the moa which are a part of Hawaiian cultural and history and are not subject to being “humanely controlled” or which should not be designated as “controllable pests.” Simply put, this bill is culturally offensive.

5) Feral chickens have become a modern symbol of Hawai‘i

Residents and visitors have begun to associate feral chickens and Hawai‘i in a positive way.⁸ Feral chickens have been described as a “memorable cultural symbol” and part of Hawai‘i’s living cultural landscape.⁹ The unchecked and cruel killing of feral chickens could lead to negative publicity for the State and be offensive to residents and visitors.

6) Conclusion

As evidenced by the overwhelming testimony in opposition to HB2561 on February 6, the complaints about feral chickens come from a vocal minority. If the goal of the Legislature is to involve the public in addressing this issue and to come up with an community-supported, effective solution it must take into account the number of people who do not believe that feral chickens are an issue. This is not to say that the State should not take action to assist

⁷ Id.

⁸ <https://www.honolulumagazine.com/afterthoughts-chickens-are-taking-over-hawaii/>

⁹ <https://nszipline.com/blog/hawaii-chickens/>; <https://www.oreateai.com/blog/the-curious-case-of-hawaiis-chickens-a-feathered-legacy/2462bd1f9ca6bb51b875b95615b4b27a>; <https://www.islands.com/1902188/hawaiian-island-stunning-views-chicken-population-outnumbers-residents-kauai/>

in addressing this issue. However, due to the complexity of this issue, the more prudent, careful, measured and informed path is to see an **effective long-term solution** to this issue rather than an **ineffective quick fix** to appease the vocal minority. The Legislature should encourage and support community members and groups, such as Hawaii Bird Rescue, Hawaii Chicken Rescue, Hina's Legacy and Trooper's Chicken Rescue that are willing to assist and collaborate with the State in effective solutions that do not involve cruelty, indiscriminate killing or dismissing feral chickens as pests.

The Legislature should form a working group consisting of members of the community, members of chicken rescue/rehabilitation organizations, representatives from the humane societies of each island, animal welfare groups, veterinarians, and DLNR and law enforcement members to discuss this issue and come up with a well-thought-out approach to this issue in a report to the Legislature. In recent years this Legislature has made efforts to stop cruelty to animals, even the federal government has joined in this endeavor.¹⁰ I am urging the Legislature to support a collaborative, well-reasoned, culturally-appropriate and humane and effective solution to the feral chicken population.

I oppose HB2561 HD1. Thank you for your consideration.

¹⁰ <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/25/782842651/trump-signs-law-making-cruelty-to-animals-a-federal-crime>

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 7:36:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bonnie Gollero	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

First, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Chair Cory Chun and the AGR committee for their judicious amendments to this bill in prohibiting individuals to kill chickens, as there would have been no monitoring set in place to ensure a layperson would have the knowledge, expertise, or the willingness, to practice proper euthanasia. I have witnessed hostile neighbors drown baby chicks, beat them with rakes and brooms, shoot roosters, hang them, poison them, unleash their dogs to kill them. It would be highly unlikely that such individuals would adhere to any law requiring humane treatment.

I also want to sincerely thank the committee's amendment to exempt rescuers from the prohibitions in this bill. These selfless individuals are not criminals to be punished with unreasonable fines. They possess the very qualities we value as a civil society, what we try to instill in our children - kindness, empathy, and caring toward the suffering, mistreated, and less fortunate, courage to choose what is morally sound, even when faced with adversity.

I have been trapping and rescuing chickens, and utilizing birth control for three years with the chickens in a wooded area on public land near my home. I think I can speak for all of us who rescue when I say how heart wrenching and despairing it would have been if denied a most basic human instinct to intervene and assist a defenseless animal being cruelly victimized. For Chair Chun and his honorable committee to have the sensitivity and insight to recognize the human toll of the dire consequences of this bill, in being forced to accept that which we find unconscionable, I am profoundly grateful.

Instead of what this bill proposes in devaluing a life as a disposable pest, I would like to humbly ask for your earnest consideration in implementing an alternative pilot plan for a defined period of time, say a year or two, for a task force to be created to address the root cause of the chicken infestations - cock fighting. For you see, we can eradicate every abandoned chicken, just as we've repeatedly done in the past, and in a very short time roosters will once again reappear, as long as cock fighting persists.

In my own particular neighborhood, I have removed over forty chickens. All of the chickens would have been removed if it weren't for the cock fighters in the nearby public housing that does not allow chickens, so the wooded area is where they are continuously dumped, then trapped by children as young as five, who, in a group, corral, capture, and ruthlessly manhandle the rooster into their backpacks. If the rooster is injured in this assault, they just leave it there, unable to escape, defend, or feed itself.

A task force allowing enforcement to utilize drones would impose a significant adverse impact on these illegal operations, just as the task force against the use of illegal fireworks has achieved in these past two years. Any confiscated monies, which has amounted to hundreds of thousands in major raids, could fund the program. Furthermore, you have hundreds of dedicated constituents - individuals and organizations, so very eager to assist enforcement in an operation such as this.

This approach presents no real concern, yet there is so much to gain. The plan is doable, and can be evaluated at or toward the end of the pilot period for feasibility and possible continued implementation. Please give this a chance.

Lastly, this bill claims that concerns with sanitation, zoological disease, and avian flu transmission, are reasons to justify the killing of these abandoned fowl. In regard to this, just a few comments on the following facts:

A) In written testimony in recent years past, the DOH does not categorize chickens as disease carrying vectors.

B) In the entire history of Hawaii there has never been a case where human illness was caused by a chicken, OR their droppings. The sun, rain, and exposure to air, degrades and deteriorates chicken droppings.

C) In our state, there has never been a case where a human contracted the avian flu via contact with a chicken. Wild birds would more likely be the infectors.

D) There has been one death, and only 70 total cases of avian flu in the entire United States since 2024. The majority infected were employed on dairy or egg production farms, where prolonged contact in close quarters with the animals, and the overcrowding of large numbers of animals living in closely confined conditions exacerbated the spread of infection.

With the utmost appreciation and respect, mahalo for your time,

Bonnie Gollero

Founder,
Palolo Citizens Patrol

Volunteer Community Organizer,
Honolulu City & County Adopt-a-Block

I am testifying in opposition to and offering comments on HB 2561 HD1.

Chickens, specifically the red jungle fowl, have a long, shared history with kānaka maoli. Helumoa or “chicken scratch” in Waikīkī was home to many ali‘i. Helumoa was supposedly named after Ka‘auhelumoa¹, the mythical chicken who flew from Ka‘au Crater to the area we know as Helumoa. After scratching the dirt at Kākuhihewa’s feet, the ali‘i ordered a coconut tree to be planted at the site where Ka‘auhelumoa scratched. The coconut tree later became a larger grove of trees, which was eventually named the King’s Grove. Other ali‘i including Mā‘ilikūkahi, Lā‘ieloheloheikawai, Kamehameha V Lot Kapuāiwa, and Kamehameha Schools’ beloved founder Bernice Pauahi Bishop were all said to have lived in Helumoa at different times. Kākuhihewa’s encounter with Ka‘auhelumoa led to a historical place rich with connection to our ali‘i.

There are countless residents who rescue, rehabilitate, and provide lifelong care to chickens, wild birds, and indigenous and non-native species across Hawai‘i. Chickens are intelligent animals who form emotional attachments to humans and to each other. They are already among the most abused animals in Hawai‘i due to widespread cockfighting, neglect, and human-caused harm. To respond by labeling them as pests only perpetuates these harmful stigmas. If HPD is truly understaffed and underfunded as they claim, reconsider having HDP and/or other law enforcement agencies as enforcing responders.

As the HD1 iteration of the bill notes prohibited acts performed for research or rescue purposes must be approved by the State or city before performance, the House must establish what the proper procedure is to receive approval. State and city agencies are already slow to implement new programs and processes, and this bill does not include language about who would be the approving department, how long it would take to issue approvals, how long approvals may last (one day, one week, one month, etc.), and what happens if the agency does not issue approvals in time for rescue or removal to occur.

I urge this House to consider and invest in empathetic, humane solutions such as providing funding and contracts to organizations that should actually help with the booming populations that the Hawaiian Humane Society chooses to ignore and say they don’t have the space, capacity, or funding to help; researching and distributing contraceptives for our invasive species; funding State-run spaying/neutering/sterilization/or even humane and compassionate euthanasia treatments to cull growing populations if necessary; and/or actually pursuing the ruthless and unbounded amount of people fighting chickens for money, which calls for barbaric violence toward chickens, clandestine gambling, and larger populations of feral birds in specific areas. Do not allow the loudest voices of residents who participate in illicit activities and/or support abhorrent policies to determine which beings get to live and who is forced to die.

¹ <https://kaiwakiloumoku.ksbe.edu/article/essays-kamehameha-schools-revitalizes-one-of-waikikiis-landmarks>

Once again, I am in opposition to HB 2561 HD1.

Noelle Kakimoto

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 7:31:52 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia Xavier Burns	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Members of the Legislature:

My name is Patricia Xavier Burns and I write to you in strong opposition to HB1852 and HB2561, including HB2561 HD1. All of these bills are presented as solutions to concerns involving chickens, and they all carry the same consequences. I thought it would be best to address them all here despite how far along they are in the process. This legislative pathway is setting a precedent that is normalizing violence against animals in our communities at a time when Hawai‘i can least afford it.

Our state is increasingly going viral, but for all the wrong reasons.

At Kitty Charm Farm in Ha‘ikū, a beloved pet pig was killed in an act that devastated its caretakers, shocked the community and stayed in the headlines for more than a year. Last year, a woman was filmed violently slamming a dog named Zuko and her cruelty was watched all over the country. A teenage boy was recorded repeatedly beating a dog in a video that spread widely online. Cats have been shot, injured and killed in Hawai‘i Kai in a series of attacks that investigators across state media are still looking into. A beloved cow was slaughtered during a trespass on Maui. Twenty sheep were brutally killed at Pāhoa Ranch.

Each of these incidents damages Hawai‘i’s reputation and wounds our communities. We in the rescue community are working tirelessly to change that narrative, showing that Hawai‘i stands for compassion, stewardship, and aloha, not the cruelty we see as images flood news and social media.

At the same time, we continue to confront the ongoing cockfighting epidemic across the islands. Every day, those of us in chicken rescue witness the firsthand consequences: animals bred or stolen for violence, discarded, maimed, neglected, or abandoned. They live their lives in pain and cruelty. The few who somehow get out alive require rescue and rehabilitation for their trauma.

Chickens are not disposable nuisances. They are highly social and intelligent animals that form lifelong bonds with one another and with humans. They recognize faces, communicate through complex vocalizations, experience fear and pain, and even mourn the loss of companions. They have long held positive cultural significance in Hawai‘i through agriculture, food systems, and family life. They also play a practical role in our ecosystem, consuming Coconut Rhinoceros

Beetles and their larvae at high rates. All of this reflects their value to our communities, but that value does not include casual killing or cockfighting.

With that in mind, Hawai‘i continues to struggle with an entrenched cockfighting epidemic, despite its clear ties to organized crime, gambling, weapons, and drug activity. Those of us in the chicken rescue community work daily with animals that have endured horrific abuse, roosters discarded after fighting, hens neglected and used in baiting or abandoned disabled birds injured beyond recognition.

Study after study has demonstrated a well-documented link between animal cruelty and violence against people. The FBI has long recognized animal cruelty as a significant indicator of broader violent behavior. Research in criminology, psychology, and domestic violence prevention consistently shows that individuals who harm animals are more likely to engage in child abuse, domestic abuse, and other violent crimes.

When legislation lowers the barrier to harming animals or frames killing as a simple “solution,” it does not occur in a vacuum. It sends a cultural message. It risks desensitizing communities, especially young people, to violence.

Violence is not humane management. It is not stewardship. And it does not reflect the values Hawai‘i is supposed to uphold.

We can address legitimate concerns through humane, science-based, and community-driven approaches that involve partnerships with rescue organizations, agricultural experts, cultural practitioners, and public safety leaders. Encouraging lethal measures will not solve root problems and may instead deepen them.

Hawai‘i should be known for innovation in humane solutions not for another viral story involving animal violence or cruelty but this time tied directly to its legislation.

I respectfully urge you to reject HB1852 and HB2561 (HD1) and work collaboratively toward compassionate, effective alternatives that reflect the true spirit of these islands.

Our keiki are watching, voters are watching and the country is watching. The culture we shape today will define Hawai‘i tomorrow.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Patricia Xavier-Burns

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 6:37:43 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kehau Lee	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Can we do something about these cock fighters instead?! You keep killing chickens, and that hasn't worked. I gave up trapping and removing them from the bushes near my house because my neighbor knows the guy and his kids who cock fight, and they're always shoving the roosters in back packs and taking them. The police won't do anything unless they witness it. The kids know this so when I ask them to stop they start cussing the f-word and calling me names. Their father has threatened me if I call the police again. This cock fighting is out of control and dangerous. Please do something!!!! STOP KILLING CHICKENS!!!!

Kehau Lee

Honolulu

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:38:45 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joelle Seashell	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill

February 17, 2026

Aloha,

I would like to submit testimony in support for Testimony Request for HB2561, addressing the mitigation and the impacts of feral chickens in Hawaii, specifically in urban areas such as Aiea. The reality of this feral chicken situation is getting out of control, especially in urban areas such as Aiea, as my family, as well as all the surrounding neighbors/families of the old sugar mill site's quality of life is being destroyed by all of these feral roosters/chickens from the constant 24/7 crowing (screaming), feces, increased fleas, and landscape destruction. In addition to the issues other communities are experiencing, our surrounding area has a very unique acoustic property (every sound that occurs in the old Sugar Mill area below, is echoed up to all of the surrounding areas! For the roosters/chickens, the current populations that I am aware of are:

- Aiea stream corridor from above the Korean church to past the Clinical Laboratories (3-6 population groups); approximately 18 roosters and 28 chickens.
- Hakina St. above the Aiea library, residents are feeding the rooster/chickens now a growing daily population of 8-12.
- EAH Senior Housing and Aiea Library parking lots (3 population groups) 6-14 birds

Additionally, in the past year there are now chickens regularly in our front and back yard throughout the day, along with their feces on our patio. This is not only an inconvenience, but a health concern to our pets and son. In the mornings as well as throughout the day, there are 4-7 roosters and 12-18 chickens on/in the open field (old Aiea Sugar Mill site); 3-5 roosters and 6-10 chickens around the library, and several chickens and roosters up and down Hakina St. and at the corner of Hakina/ Aiea Heights Drive/Honohono St. In the past few years years the feral chicken population has only grown exponentially and along with it, the community's concern for negative effects of having undomesticated animals in the neighborhood and around the children. Additionally, These birds congregate around water sources that could lead to pollution in the water that navigates throughout our neighborhoods and enters into our ocean/harbor. Also, these fowl gather in populated areas because some in our neighborhood feed them. An educational campaign should go hand in hand with any physical eradication efforts, creating an awareness for the health and safety issues of feeding any feral animal population. Some of the negative effects of our feral chicken population are the noise of uncontrolled and untimely crowing, chickens aggressively approaching our young children and aging kupunas, fueling the cockfighting rooster population, dead carcasses rotting in the neighborhood and the vehicular near misses of cars swearing or killing chickens who are increasing on our road ways.

In Conclusion, please pass for HB2561, addressing mitigation and the impacts of feral chickens in Hawaii so we as a State, and the affected communities and citizens can begin to regain our quiet and healthy communities without feral chickens/roosters.

Mahalo,

Andy Kaufman, ASLA, MLA, Ph.D

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 11:24:41 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexis Bryant	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Alexis, and I am a resident of Hawai‘i. I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to HB2561, HB980, and HB1852. I am also representing thousands of residents who rescue, rehabilitate, and provide lifelong care to feral chickens across the island.

While this bill is presented as a public health and nuisance measure, its provisions risk increasing animal abuse, enabling illegal cockfighting activity, and sending harmful messages to children about the acceptability of cruelty toward animals. Hawai‘i already struggles with widespread cockfighting, and any law that weakens protections for chickens and roosters, or reframes them as pests, creates dangerous loopholes that can be exploited.

Classifying feral chickens as a “controllable pest” on public lands is deeply concerning. This language devalues living animals and opens the door to inhumane treatment under the guise of control, including shooting, violent trapping, or other abusive acts carried out without proper oversight. In a state where cockfighting remains a persistent problem, this classification risks further normalizing violence toward these animals.

The bill’s prohibition on feeding or supporting feral chickens on public lands may appear reasonable on its surface, but in practice it discourages compassion while failing to address the root causes of the issue, such as abandonment, illegal breeding, and cockfighting-related dumping. Criminalizing care without providing meaningful, humane alternatives will not reduce suffering; it will only hide it.

Humane population control options already exist and should be prioritized over lethal or abusive methods. These include egg management, such as collecting freshly laid eggs or humanely adding eggs to prevent hatching; partnerships with animal rescues or sanctuaries to relocate excess roosters; humane trapping conducted by trained personnel with birds transferred to rescue organizations; and stronger enforcement and education to prevent dumping, particularly related to cockfighting activity. These approaches reduce population growth responsibly without normalizing cruelty.

There are also successful models from other island communities that Hawai‘i should seriously consider. In Key West, Florida, feral chickens are legally protected and recognized as part of the island’s character. It is illegal there to abuse, harm, or kill them. Instead of punitive or violent

control, Key West works with a wildlife center that assists with the relocation and rehabilitation of chickens when needed. This approach demonstrates that humane treatment, public accountability, and coexistence are both achievable and effective.

Most troubling is the normalization of animal abuse among children, which I personally witness far too often. I have repeatedly seen children capture, harm, and torture chickens in public areas. I have called authorities numerous times while these acts were actively occurring and waited on site, yet no law enforcement response ever came. From a community perspective, there is concern that some policymakers may not fully understand how free-roaming chickens are treated especially, in lower-income areas, where abuse and neglect are more visible and harder to address. This situation highlights gaps in the existing legal framework and underscores the need for proactive legislative attention.

In one instance, a child told me directly that he wanted one hundred dollars for a chicken he had just caught, stating that the chicken was intended for fighting and that the cops would not do anything. This interaction was deeply disturbing and demonstrates that children already understand there are no real consequences for this behavior. It reflects a failure of enforcement and a legal environment where animal abuse is effectively tolerated.

When children grow up believing that harming animals is acceptable, ignored, or excused, it creates far greater problems for the future of our communities. This is not only an animal welfare issue, it is a public safety and child development issue. Numerous studies link animal cruelty to future violent behavior, and our laws should be working to prevent this, not reinforce it.

It is also deeply concerning that Hawai‘i already carries a widely documented reputation for weak animal protection and high rates of animal cruelty, something that can be easily confirmed through public reports and national rankings. This image does not align with the values Hawai‘i publicly promotes of compassion, stewardship, and respect for life, and legislation like HB2561 risks reinforcing that reputation rather than correcting it.

Animal abuse should never be dismissed or defended as culture. Cockfighting and the torture of animals are not part of Hawaiian culture, and labeling cruelty as cultural tradition is a harmful excuse that enables further abuse while disrespecting true Hawaiian values of mālama, kuleana, and respect for life.

Feral chickens and roosters are sentient beings who deserve humane treatment and legal protection. Hawai‘i’s laws should be closing loopholes, not creating new ones that make abuse easier to justify or ignore. The Legislature must decide whether Hawai‘i will continue to be seen as a place that tolerates cruelty, or choose to lead with compassion, accountability, and humane solutions that reflect the values it claims to uphold.

As engaged residents and voters, many of us are paying close attention to how our legislators act on this issue. Decisions made on bills like HB2561 will be remembered when voting time comes, and I, along with many others, will continue to advocate for these animals and for laws that reflect what is right and humane.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose HB2561, and the following bills HB 980
HB1852.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Alexis
Oahu

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB2561, HD1. While I acknowledge the House Draft 1 amendments regarding research and rescue exemptions, the bill's core remains flawed and dangerous to animal welfare standards in Hawaii.

The Danger of the "Pest" Designation

Formally labeling feral chickens as "controllable pests" invites community violence and sets a troubling legal precedent. While HD1 includes rescue exemptions, it creates a paradox in that you cannot effectively protect or rehabilitate an animal that the state has legally branded as a nuisance. This designation lowers the bird's status in the eyes of the public and law enforcement, making it significantly harder for rescuers to advocate for humane treatment or intervene in cases of abuse. It provides a way for those engaged in cruel practices to further disregard the welfare of these animals. As a resident, I have witnessed keiki mistreating these birds; the FBI and psychological experts recognize animal cruelty as a primary indicator of future interpersonal violence. This bill inadvertently messages that some lives are worthless, eroding the ethical foundation of Hawaii's animal protection laws.

Reactionary Funding vs. Root Causes

The new appropriation of funds for "collecting" birds is a reactionary use of taxpayer money. These resources would be far more effective if directed toward enforcing laws against illegal cockfighting and dumping—the actual source of this crisis. Funding the removal of animals while ignoring the human criminal activity behind their population surge treats only the symptom, not the disease.

Humane Alternatives

I urge the committee to consider humane alternatives, such as sanctuary relocation or supporting existing bird rescue and rehabilitation groups. We must hold breeders accountable rather than punishing animals for human negligence.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Committee to HOLD HB2561, HD1.

With aloha,

Megan Viernes

Ewa

HB-2561-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 12:52:24 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gregory Misakian	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

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

While I understand the intent of HB2561 HD1, as I personally have been impacted by roosters waking me up since I moved to Hawaii, this bill is very concerning to me (and clearly to the many opposing it).

First and foremost, I and many others have a great love of animals, as I'm sure those on this committee do and many legislators do. With this in mind, please know that HB2561 HD1 will result in the deaths of many chickens and roosters, often by euthanization in a gas chamber.

I have also seen the cruelty that some exhibit, when I was called to help a rooster lying in a parking lot behind my building, apparently shot with a pellet gun (which I later learned was reported to have been from my building). X-rays confirmed the rooster was shot with pellets, and thanks to Aloha Bird Rescue who took the injured rooster and paid for his surgery to remove the pellets, he survived. Aloha Bird Rescue also rehabbed and took care of him, and the last report I had was that he was hanging out with a hen he seemed fond of.

The most amazing part of turning one act of cruelty into a good story where many came together to help, is the look the rooster gave me when he was injured and knew I was there to help him. His aloha was clear and strong. I ask all on this committee to please show aloha to the chickens, and if you need to enact a bill to mitigate the population, please do so with aloha and ensure that the chickens are placed into a sanctuary or private farms, where they will not be killed.

Respectfully,

Gregory Misakian