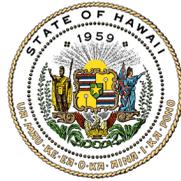


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



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

SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

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

BEFORE THE HOUSEE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

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

**HOUSEE BILL NO. 2572
RELATING TO SUBSISTENCE GARDENING**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2572. This bill establishes within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) a temporary Subsistence-Plus Gardening Pilot Program. Requires a report to the Legislature and appropriates funds. The Department supports the intent and offers comments.

Community gardens are an excellent way to alleviate food insecurity, provide healthy outdoor activity, create a connection with agriculture and strengthens communities. These community gardens also contribute to Hawaii's food self-sufficiency.

The Department has concerns about the size, tenure and acquisition of the lands to be utilized for the three-year pilot program and the intent for the community food production hubs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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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 2572
RELATING TO SUBSISTENCE GARDENING

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 2572, which establishes a three-year Subsistence-Plus Gardening pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

HFB believes that increasing community participation in food production strengthens Hawai'i's overall food resilience. Small-scale gardening initiatives, particularly those focused on priority and cultural crops, can help reconnect residents with agriculture, improve food awareness, and encourage local food production at the household and community level.

Programs that activate underutilized lands and support community-based food production complement commercial agriculture and contribute to broader food security goals. Efforts to grow and maintain Hawaiian canoe crops and other locally important food crops also support cultural knowledge and agricultural education.

HB 2572 represents a pilot approach that allows the State to explore practical pathways to strengthen grassroots food production while evaluating its long-term viability and impact.

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



February 16, 2026

To: Chair Cory M. Chun, and Vice Chair Matthias Kusch, and the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Subject: **HB2572**, Relating to the Subsistence Gardening

Aloha,

I am writing in **support of HB2572** which establishes within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity a three-year subsistence-plus gardening pilot program. This program would increase access to land for growing food in the state, support food security, build a more resilient food system, encourage sustainable farming practices, and generate modest incomes for participants who continue growing food. This measure would undertake the essential task of identifying suitable small plots of underutilized agricultural land to become available for this community-based sustainable farming initiative.

Increasing the number of small subsistence growers re-establishes community connection to the 'āina and supports local production of nourishing food. A Subsistence Plus program can establish culturally grounded mentoring for cultivation of food crops and increase access to land for farming. Support and creation of subsistence agriculture projects are essential building blocks for Hawai'i's food security and resilience goals.

As a matter of greater Hawaiian Islands' food security, **I urge this committee to pass HB2572** to appropriate funds for the establishment of a three-year subsistence gardening program.

Mahalo,

Sydney Haas & 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.



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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 HB2572.**

HB2572 proposes a three-year subsistence-plus gardening pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to utilize small plots of underutilized land for community gardening purposes. While the intention of improving food security and sovereignty is commendable, there are several aspects that need consideration and potential amendment to ensure the program effectively supports local farmers and community gardening initiatives.

The identification and allocation of small plots of land might be more efficiently handled at the county level, where there is a better understanding of local land use and availability. Counties have more direct land use oversight and could facilitate faster allocation and zoning of such plots.

The bill should clearly define "small community-based farm clubs" to prevent ambiguity. Concerningly, this pilot program could exacerbate demand for agricultural park lands unless well designed. Finally, additional resources and staffing may be needed to manage this program without impacting current departmental operations.

HFU supports subsistence-based community initiatives, but believes the potential challenges posed by implementation at the state level need to be addressed.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 10:19:22 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roberta Hickey-Gómez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Cory M. Chun, Vice Chair Matthias Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Roberta Hickey-Gómez, and I am writing in strong support of HB2572, which establishes a three-year subsistence-plus gardening pilot program under the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

This program represents a meaningful step toward strengthening food security, food sovereignty, and community resilience across Hawai‘i. By identifying underutilized land and empowering small community-based farm clubs to plant, grow, and harvest priority crops this initiative provides immediate access to nutritious, locally grown food while helping preserve culturally significant practices.

Supporting community food production hubs and facilitating access to land ensures that residents can actively participate in cultivating their own food, fostering self-sufficiency while reinforcing the values of Aloha ‘āina and Mālama ‘āina. Programs like this nurture connections to the land, local agriculture, and intergenerational knowledge of Hawaiian farming practices.

It is my hope that this pilot program can serve as the spark of a flame, inspiring and demonstrating the benefits of subsistence gardening so that every community throughout the state of Hawai‘i can eventually have access to the skills, resources, and foods that support food security, cultural heritage, and sustainable living.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to support and pass HB2572.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration,
Roberta Hickey-Gómez, Pūowaina Resident

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 11:45:42 AM

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

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

Comments:

In strong support. The Subsistence Plus concept is a great idea to get behind for all our communities! Please fund this program with enough substance to be successful. An ag water meter costs a minimum of \$30,000 to install. A mini excavator that could be shared by participants costs \$45-60,000. \$50,000 per acre should be the minimum level of support for implementing this program.

mahalo.

Penny

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 6:12:19 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

2572 HB RELATING TO SUBSISTENCE GARDENING.

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:27:38 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel Bishop	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha All

My name is Daniel Bishop and I am in support of SB 2704.

I am a small farmer and lease agricultural lands in Waiahole and Punaluu Oahu. One of our missions has been to provide space for intrestead community members, young and old, to reenstate our connection to our wellbeing, community,and environment through the interaction of growing highly nutritious foods.

There has been lots of people who have participated in the Aloha Aina movement at our locations as well as at other farms and nonprofits throughout Oahu and on the other Islands. The Subsistence Plus Farmers Prfogram will provide the means for more people to have an intimate relationship to thier enviroment, and healthy food. It will provide a space where participants can meet /feed others within thier communities.

The program will also help provide highly nutrisious foods to participants Families as well as the neighboring communities

The Subsistence Plus Gardening Program will help in moving forward a sustainable answer to our Food Insecurity situation..

I hope that you will support this effort to bring our families together to grow wellbeing and sustainable gardening.

Mahalo

Danny Bishop

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:17:56 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mealaaloha Bishop	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for hearing this bill.

With a goal of independent farming we become the glue for share holders in community strength.

Corporate monopolies must make room for farming on the community level. Looking forward to allowing for leasees of their own sole lessee parcels is the goal. Small farms are more likely to manage their areas resources, without the pressure to buy seeds, round up etc. for example.

Empower the citizens to be part of farming through innovative best practices and networks. This type of shared farming gives participants opportunity to maintain more control over their operations and with the satisfaction of knowing they are part of the solution while also reaching optimum health and prosperity.

hanohano e mahi'ai

mealaaloha bishop

LATE

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 10:41:32 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keilah Kanahele	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

I am writing in support of HB2572. This bill is important for the well-being of our communities and the protection of our ‘āina. In Hawai‘i, we understand that caring for our land and resources is part of our kuleana to future generations. Passing HB2572 would reflect our shared values of mālama ‘āina and aloha for our people. I respectfully urge you to support this measure.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

-Keilah Kanahele

LATE

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 11:24:06 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hayden Winchester	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kakou,

My name is Imaikalani Winchester, and I am a Kanaka Maoli educator for two decades, focusing on sustainable agricultural education.

Please support HB 2572, which establishes, within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, a temporary Subsistence-Plus Gardening Pilot Program.

Sincerely,

Imaikalani Winchester

LATE

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 11:52:42 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mason	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

My name is Mason Canonico and I am in support of this bill for the subsistence gardening program. I am not a farmer. But I have been personally working with Uncle Danny for the past year, and I have experienced the sweeping benefits of growing your own food. I created an instagram page online, to document my journey and gauge interest (@tarostewards). I had people showing up who had never even stepped on a farm before. Right now, we have a working prototype of this bill already in effect. A consistent group of people who show up weekly to grow together, pay dues, and feed themselves. This bill provides a framework for a future model where instead of a few feeding many, many are feeding themselves. We have interest. We have momentum. Now all we need is an opportunity. Please give this pilot program your support.
Aloha

LATE

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:04:53 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dustin K Roberts	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is **Dustin Roberts**, and I am submitting testimony in **strong support of HB 2572** for your AGR hearing on **February 18, 2026**.

I support this measure because it creates a real, practical way to strengthen Hawai‘i’s food security by helping families and community groups **gain access to land** and grow food with intention and accountability. HB 2572 establishes a **three-year Subsistence-Plus Gardening Pilot Program** within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

I was raised on a farm in **Waikāne**, where we worked with **taro, prawns**, and a wide variety of **vegetables and fruits**. Growing up that way taught me that feeding a household takes consistency—showing up every day, planning ahead, and taking care of soil and water. It also taught me that when local people can grow food, the whole community is stronger.

As a **Native Hawaiian**, I want to be able to use land in a **productive, responsible way**—to mālama ‘āina, feed our people, and pass skills forward. HB 2572 supports that kuleana by directing the program to identify **underutilized small plots (not more than two acres)** based on **soil, terrain, and water availability**, and then make those lands available to **small community-based farm clubs** that are already demonstrating participation and momentum.

I also strongly support that the bill prioritizes real outcomes—planting, growing, and harvesting **priority crops (including Hawaiian canoe crops)** to improve food security and food sovereignty, and providing support for **community food production hubs** so harvests can become real community benefit.

Finally, HB 2572 includes accountability: it requires the department to report findings and recommendations to the Legislature before the 2029 Regular Session, appropriates funding for implementation, and sets an effective date of **July 1, 2026**.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **PASS HB 2572** and move it forward.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Me ke aloha,
Dustin Roberts



HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 7:33:33 PM
Testimony for AGR on 2/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Shaljian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Emily Shaljian, and I am a community member who strongly supports HB2572.

The program detailed in this bill creates opportunities for community members like myself to connect with the 'āina, while building skills in subsistence farming, connecting over shared values and experience, and building strong communities rooted in mutual stewardship over the pae 'āina. As someone who has participated in many Āina days and volunteered as a land steward across the island, I can say the benefits of allowing people to come and dig their hands in the dirt and be a part of community in this way are unmeasurable. Our culture is facing a crisis of disconnection due to overuse of technology in post-COVID social environments, and the solution seems to be revealed by experiences like the one this bill proposes. Bringing people together under a shared mission where they get to learn together by growing and sharing food together is a transformative and healing experience. I can only hope that more people get to see the value in it, and we can continue to develop programs with the goal of healing the land and the people together in this way.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB 2572.

Mahalo.

Emily Shaljian

LATE

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:04:30 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelly Tokunaga May	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members

I am in support of HB2572 related to subsistence gardening. Our state relies heavily on outside food which neglects local farming for families and communities. The funding for this pilot program will help to increase interest and provide families with healthy, local variety, and cheaper food options.

We are at a pivotal time after the pandemic where people are concerned about food security and healthier choices with less dependence on outside industries bring in our food. We want to feel good about feeding our families healthy and local produce. This program is one way we can start to make this a reality.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Shelly Tokunaga May, EdD, LSW

LATE

HB-2572

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 8:04:40 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alapaki Luke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai,

My name is Alapaki Luke, and I am a subsistence farmer in Ko‘olauloa. I support this measure. Subsistence farming has made an impact on the younger generations that I mentor. They can feed their ‘ohana and community without the stress of the expenses if this bill is supported. We are still in the early stages of a growing interest, but land and water need to be affordable, better yet, at no cost or minimal cost.

Mahalo nui,

Alapaki Luke