

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

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State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026

2:00 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM 308 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2595, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO REGIONAL AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2595, House Draft1. This bill establishes the Regional Agricultural Feasibility and Food Systems Production Studies Working Group within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) to provide coordinated, region-specific agricultural production and crop feasibility analysis across the State. Require reports to the Legislature and appropriate funds. The Department supports the intent of the bill and offers comments.

The information to be developed by the working group will provide valuable information to agricultural producers and decision-makers across the state and guide region-specific agricultural production. The multi-agency evidence-based planning framework will help ensure that a comprehensive agricultural assessment is used to support food systems plans and agriculture throughout the state.

The complexity and broad scope of work that is to be considered by the working group will require significant amounts of time and expertise to complete. Participation in the group may require full-time dedication from members and significant contributions from other staff with expertise in various disciplines to complete all of the required analyses and assigned tasks. The Department would respectfully request that sufficient resources and an appropriation be provided to ensure the success of the working group in completing this important work.

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 Finance
March 3, 2026 at 2:00 p.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 2595 HD1 – RELATING TO REGIONAL AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony offering comments on HB 2595 HD1 which establishes the Regional Feasibility and Food Systems Production Studies Working Group within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to provide coordinated, region-specific agricultural production and crop feasibility analysis across the State. Requires reports to the Legislature and appropriates funds until 6/30/2028.

We respectfully offer the following comments. College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) believes that the diversity of climate, soils, farm sizes, and agricultural practices of Hawai'i make it critical to collect local and regional agricultural feasibility and production data. Accurate and up-to-date agricultural information are crucial for all stakeholders to make informed decisions, develop effective policies, and monitor effective programs that will have large and far-reaching impacts. CTAHR conducts agro-ecological analysis, investigates crop suitability; and executes soil health research and assessments, climate and elevation modeling, and production systems research. CTAHR has developed land suitability maps for all islands for 21 crops.

CTAHR can also assist with Controlled Environmental Agriculture (CEA) opportunities. In 2025, the Legislature approved a \$6 million CIP for CTAHR to develop a CEA research and workforce development facility in Mānoa that included the development of a commercial scale prototype that could be useful statewide for research, instruction, farming training, local food production and entrepreneurship, and assist with sourcing local fresh produce to the Department of Education's Regional Kitchen Program. In 2026, CTAHR also received a federal award of \$2 million for CEA applied research.

CTAHR will collaborate as a member of the working group and share its expertise in agriculture and natural resource management and its Centers for Applied Research and Extension Services (CARES) in all counties to address island specific needs. The appropriation in HB 2595 HD1 will support statewide community assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



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March 3, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON HB 2595, HD1
RELATING TO REGIONAL AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

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

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 2595, HD1, which establishes a regional, data-driven framework to better understand agricultural feasibility and food production capacity across Hawai'i's diverse islands and regions.

HFB appreciates that this measure recognizes the need to move beyond assumptions and toward realistic, region-specific analysis that accounts for profitability, infrastructure, labor availability, and market access. Agricultural production in Hawai'i varies significantly by island, elevation, climate, and available resources, and effective planning must reflect these on-the-ground realities rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

We also value the bill's emphasis on neighbor island conditions and its intent to align agricultural planning with real-world constraints and opportunities. Ensuring that farmers, ranchers, and agricultural stakeholders are engaged in this process will be critical to producing practical and actionable recommendations.

HB 2595, HD1 represents a thoughtful step toward more informed decision-making that can better guide future investments in agriculture, infrastructure, and food systems planning. The Hawai'i Farm Bureau respectfully urges the Committee to support this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



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Executive Officers

Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp., *Chair*
Jayson Watts, Mahi Pono, *Vice Chair*
Jill Tamura, Tamura Super Market, *Secretary/Treas.*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *President and Executive Director*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, Odom, *Advisor*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Advisor*
Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Finance
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: March 3, 2026

TIME: 2pm

RE: HB2595 HD1 Relating to
Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure to establish the regional agricultural feasibility and food systems production studies working group to provide coordinated, region-specific agricultural production and crop feasibility analysis across the State.

As the measure notes legislature finds the State's long-term food security, rural economic resilience, and institutional procurement strategies depend on a clear, data-driven understanding of what crops can be grown profitably, at scale, in different regions of the State. Current food systems plans frequently rely on assumptions regarding production capacity, supply readiness, and labor availability, rather than comprehensive agricultural feasibility assessments.

HFIA requests that as the working group moved ahead they reach out to HFIA so that we can help connect them with the largest food industry in the state and provide expertise on these important issues.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2595-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 1:50:12 PM

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

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

Comments:

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

I am writing in **strong support** of HB2595, which establishes the Regional Agricultural Feasibility and Food Systems Production Studies Working Group within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to provide coordinated, region-specific agricultural production and crop feasibility analysis across the State.

Why This Bill Is Necessary

Hawai‘i imports approximately **85% of its food**, leaving us profoundly vulnerable to natural disasters, global supply chain disruptions, and economic shocks. The Legislature has repeatedly recognized this vulnerability, passing resolutions and bills over multiple sessions to study and improve our food systems. Yet a critical gap remains: we lack coordinated, region-specific data on what can grow where, under what conditions, and with what level of economic viability.

HB2595 addresses this gap directly. It creates a working group tasked with providing the kind of granular, place-based analysis that farmers, policymakers, and communities need to make informed decisions about agricultural production.

Building on Previous Efforts

This bill is not starting from scratch—it builds on a growing foundation of legislative and academic work. In 2023, the Legislature established a Sustainable Food Systems Working Group within the Department of Agriculture to develop an interagency food systems plan, recognizing that the State must lead with policies that integrate food security, economic development, and environmental protection. In 2024, companion resolutions expanded this vision to include food waste, sustainable fisheries, food systems resilience, and disaster preparation.

HB2595 takes the next logical step. It moves from broad food systems planning to the specific, actionable question of **regional agricultural feasibility**. What crops are best suited to the microclimates of Hāmākua versus Kona? What infrastructure exists—or is needed—to support production in different regions? What are the economic barriers and opportunities unique to each area? These are the questions this working group would answer.

The Science Supports Regional Approaches

Recent research underscores the importance of region-specific agricultural analysis. Scientists at the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Hilo are currently studying how climate variability impacts specialty crop systems across the U.S. Pacific Basin, emphasizing the need for location-specific pest management, cultivar development, and decision support systems.

Similarly, University of Hawai‘i researchers have demonstrated that traditional Hawaiian agroecological systems were finely adapted to specific microclimates, topography, and soils across the archipelago—and that understanding these historical adaptations can improve the efficiency of contemporary agricultural systems.

These findings confirm what farmers have always known: agriculture in Hawai‘i is not one-size-fits-all. What works in one region may fail in another. We need systematic, science-based analysis to match crops to places and to identify the investments needed to make production viable.

The Working Group Structure

HB2595 places the working group within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, ensuring administrative support and coordination with existing programs. The bill requires reports to the Legislature, creating accountability and ensuring that findings translate into action. And by focusing on feasibility and production analysis, the working group will generate practical, usable information for growers, nurseries, and agricultural producers across the state.

A Critical Tool for Food Security

The stakes could not be higher. As climate change intensifies, our agricultural systems will face increasing pressure from extreme weather, shifting growing conditions, and new pests and diseases. At the same time, global disruptions—pandemics, conflicts, supply chain failures—remind us daily of the dangers of overreliance on imported food.

HB2595 gives us a tool to respond to these challenges with clarity and purpose. It says that we will not guess about what is possible; we will study it. We will not assume what works; we will analyze it. And we will not leave our farmers to navigate these complex decisions alone; we will support them with the best available data and coordinated planning.

Conclusion

Our farmers are ready to grow more of what we eat. Our communities are ready to support them. But good intentions are not enough. We need coordinated, region-specific analysis to guide investment, inform policy, and empower producers. HB2595 provides exactly that.

I urge this committee to pass HB2595 and invest in the planning and analysis our agricultural future demands.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2595-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 7:27:32 PM

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

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

Comments:

GOOD IDEAS WILL COME FROM THIS. MAHALO!