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WENDY GADY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
**AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
HUI HO'OU LU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY  
March 27, 2026  
10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 411 & Videoconference

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 117  
URGING THE GOVERNOR TO ASSESS FOOD INSECURITY CONDITIONS AND  
IMPLEMENT A STATEWIDE FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE PLAN.

Chairperson Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **in support** of HCR117, which requests a comprehensive evaluation of whether conditions in Hawai'i warrant the declaration of a food security emergency and directs coordinated action across state agencies to improve food access and expand local production.

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) supports the intent of this measure. HCR117 reflects a timely recognition that Hawai'i's food system—while improving—remains vulnerable to external shocks, supply chain disruptions, and structural constraints that limit local production and distribution.

### **I. Importance of Evaluating Emergency Conditions**

Hawai'i imports approximately 80–90% of its food, creating systemic risk for island communities that are geographically isolated and highly dependent on consistent transportation and infrastructure.

Recent flooding events on O'ahu underscores this vulnerability. Families were left without electricity, limiting refrigeration and food storage, and in some

cases without immediate access to food. These conditions were compounded by the fact that one of the two primary access routes into affected communities was blocked, significantly constraining the movement of goods, emergency services, and food distribution. This highlights how quickly infrastructure disruption can isolate communities and intensify food insecurity at the household level.

A formal evaluation of whether current conditions meet the threshold for a food security emergency is both prudent and aligned with the State's responsibility to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of its residents. Such an evaluation should consider:

- Supply chain fragility and reliance on imports
- Cost of food and access disparities across communities
- Capacity constraints in local production, processing, and distribution
- Emergency preparedness for disruptions, including extreme weather events and transportation access limitations.

## **II. Coordinated Interagency Approach**

HCR117 appropriately calls for collaboration among the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT), and Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA).

A coordinated framework is essential because food security intersects with public health, economic development, emergency management, and social services. ADC recommends that this interagency effort include:

- **Alignment with existing mandates**, including Act 175 (local food procurement for public institutions) and Act 151 (expanding agricultural production through commodity mapping)
- **Clear designation of roles and responsibilities** to ensure accountability and reduce duplication.

### **III. Short-Term Actions to Increase Food Access**

The resolution's focus on near-term actions is critical, particularly considering recent emergency conditions experienced by communities. Potential short-term actions include:

- Expanding aggregation and distribution through regional food hubs, including facilities such as the Central O'ahu Agriculture and Food Hub
- Increasing procurement of locally produced food for schools and state institutions to stabilize demand and improve access.
- Supporting mobile markets, community-based distribution, and partnerships with food banks
- Pre-positioning and deploying cold storage, processing, and transportation assets to reduce spoilage and maintain food access during disruptions, especially in communities with limited ingress and egress routes.

### **IV. Identifying Regulatory Barriers to Expanding Local Production**

A central component of HCR117 is the identification of regulatory constraints that limit Hawai'i's ability to scale local food production and value-added manufacturing. Based on ADC's experience, key areas for review include:

- **Land use and permitting** processes that delay agricultural development and infrastructure deployment.
- **Water access and system modernization**, including permitting for irrigation improvements and reservoir upgrades.
- **Food safety and processing regulations**, particularly for small and mid-scale producers seeking to enter value-added markets.
- **Workforce housing and labor constraints** impacting agricultural operations.
- **Energy costs and infrastructure limitations**, especially for cold storage and processing facilities

Addressing these barriers will require coordinated policy recommendations and, where appropriate, legislative or administrative action.

## **V. Alignment with Ongoing State Initiatives**

HCR117 complements ongoing efforts by the State to strengthen food systems, including:

- The Food and Product Innovation Network (Act 237, SLH 2025), advancing value-added manufacturing and food resilience.
- ADC's alignment of land use with commodity mapping and institutional demand
- Investments in shared infrastructure such as irrigation systems, food hubs, and processing facilities

## **Conclusion**

HCR117 provides a structured approach to assess Hawai'i's food security risks, coordinate state resources, and identify actionable steps to improve food access and expand local production.

ADC supports this measure as an important step toward a more resilient, self-sufficient, and equitable food system for Hawai'i. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HCR117.



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

DATE: March 27, 2026  
TIME: 10am

RE: HR109 HCR117 URGING THE GOVERNOR TO ASSESS FOOD INSECURITY  
CONDITIONS AND IMPLEMENT A STATEWIDE FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE  
PLAN.

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. The most recent data from the Hawaii Foodbank shows that our state has 30% food insecurity on average, with some parts of the state experiencing food insecurity rates of close to 40%. Assessing food insecurity conditions in the State and implement a statewide food security response plan to address systemic gaps in access and local production is an important step to fighting food insecurity.

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**HR-109**

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Testimony for PBS on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ryan Emmons	Waiakea Inc	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ryan Emmons, President of Waiakea Inc., the operating company for Waiakea Hawaiian Volcanic Water, testifying in strong support of HCR117, urging the State to assess food insecurity conditions and implement a statewide food security response plan.

Food security is very important for our island community, and continues to be a top priority for our company. Given Hawai'i's reliance on imported goods, we see firsthand how disruptions in supply chains can quickly impact access to essential resources.

We believe a coordinated, statewide approach is necessary to better understand where the gaps are and how we can respond more effectively. In particular, increasing local production, improving access in high-need communities, and identifying barriers that limit growth are all critical steps forward.

We have supported disaster relief efforts across the islands over the years, including coordinating water distribution with the Red Cross, and we believe the private sector can play an important role in supporting the State's efforts as this plan develops.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Public Safety  
Friday, March 27, 2026; 10:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 411  
Via Videoconference**

**RE: HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 117/HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 109 -- URGING THE GOVERNOR TO ASSESS FOOD INSECURITY CONDITIONS AND IMPLEMENT A STATEWIDE FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE PLAN.**

Chair San Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** House Concurrent Resolution No. 117 and House Resolution No. 1099 -- URGING THE GOVERNOR TO ASSESS FOOD INSECURITY CONDITIONS AND IMPLEMENT A STATEWIDE FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE PLAN., and **OFFERS A FRIENDLY AMENDMENT.**

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

**I. A DIFFERENT ANGLE TO THIS PROBLEM**

During the interim following the Adjournment Sine Die of the 2025 Regular Session, four (4) events took place that have enormous ramifications on Hawaii's social safety net. These were:

- The enactment of House Resolution No. 1 (H.R. 1), the "One Big Beautiful Bill" Act, which was signed into law on July 4, 2025;
- The expiration of Enhanced Affordable Care Act (ACA) premium tax credits on December 31, 2025;
- The reversal of interpretation of "federal public benefit" under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, or "PRWORA", by the United States Department of Health and Human Services; and

**Testimony on House Concurrent Resolution No. 117/Senate Resolution No. 109**  
**Friday, March 27, 2026; 10:00 a.m.**  
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- The announcement that the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services will share personal data of Medicaid enrollees to Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials.

In tandem, these developments will fundamentally alter Hawaii's Medicaid Program by shifting current ACA insureds and Medicaid recipients to the uninsured population. Among other things, H.R. 1 will:

- Prohibit the use of federal matching funds for health care services to immigrants not lawfully present under federal law, effective October 1, 2026;
- Establish work or volunteer requirements for all Medicaid recipients of at least 80 hours per month (or 20 hours per week), effective December 31, 2026; and
- Require redeterminations for every Medicaid recipient every six-months, also effective December 31, 2026.

The expiration of the ACA premium tax credits will:

- Lead to enrollee premium payments to increase by over 75%;
- Lead to households earning over 400% of the federal poverty level (\$63,000 for individuals and \$129,000 for a family of four) no longer receiving any premium tax credits; and
- Force states to provide additional state-funded subsidies to soften the financial impact.

Currently, Hawaii's uninsured population is estimated to be 38,400 or 2.8% of the total population. Based on research provided by the Kaiser Family Foundation as well as our review of Medicaid enrollment historically in Hawaii, **we believe the uninsured population will at least double within two to three years if nothing is done.**

Without health insurance coverage, citizens will no longer be able to manage chronic disease such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and other maladies. When they become ill, they will not get treated until the situation becomes so bad that they will need to go to a provider for emergency treatment. By then, the illness has become much more severe and costly to remedy. Also, by law, the emergency provider will have to provide stabilizing treatment to the patient regardless of the patient's ability to pay. These costs will subsequently be borne by the provider, creating additional stress to the safety net that is already facing reduced funding and reimbursement.

In the worst-case scenario, hospitals and FQHCs will not be able to treat the increase in indigent patients. While federal law requires FQHCs to provide services to all patients who are not eligible for Medicaid or private insurance on a sliding fee scale based on their ability to pay, federal grant funding to

offset these costs were not adjusted to address the increase that will occur. As such, should Hawaii experience the largest projected increase in uninsured (and assuming that the level of services currently provided remains the same), FQHCs will run out of funds within two to three months.

## **II. HOW THIS IMPACTS FOOD SECURITY**

With more people uninsured, the general health care of entire communities will decline. People will put off tending to their health care needs longer. Because of inflation and the lagging of salary increases, our citizens will have a harder time putting food on the table. More and more of Hawaii's population are struggling to survive. With fewer people insured, anytime a family member gets sick, moneys that went for food and rent will have to be shifted to pay for medicine and health provider visits.

And within two to three years, more of Hawaii's families will have to decide whether to forego medical attention to feed their Ohana.

The implementation dates for H.R. 1 are staggered with elements taking effect in October 2026, and others on January 1, 2027. When that happens, hundreds of citizens will lose their Medicaid coverage and fall into this situation.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATION**

In light of all this, the HPCA respectfully requests that the resolutions be amended to include findings noting the impacts of H.R. 1 on Hawaii's social safety net over the next three years and how the staggered implementation of this new law will exacerbate the food insecurity of Hawaii's families very quickly.

**With these amendments, the HPCA supports these resolutions.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.