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Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI A KIA'I MEAOLA
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
AND HOUSING**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2026
1:05 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 225**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2006
RELATING TO FARM EMPLOYEE HOUSING**

Chairs Gabbard and Chang, Vice Chairs Richards and Hashimoto and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2006 that clarifies that a "farm dwelling" permitted in an agricultural district includes a single-family farm dwelling with an accessory employee housing structure, subject to certain restrictions. The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) supports farmworker housing, however, has concerns.

The Department notes that this measure appears to make the accessory employee housing structure accessory to the farm dwelling rather than to the farm itself. We are uncertain what affect this will have on other statutes and county zoning ordinances. This bill redefines "farm dwelling" from a "single-family" dwelling to a "residential" dwelling located on and accessory to a farm (page 2, line 1-3).

The new term "accessory employee housing structure" (page 2, line 10 to page 3, line 10) is described mostly in physical terms and does not reinforce the relationship of the "accessory employee housing structure" to the farm that the farm dwelling is already accessory to.

Accessory employee housing structures are to have the following characteristics:

- May consist of multiple residential dwelling units;
- Be attached or detached from the single-family dwelling;
- Be no larger than eight hundred habitable square feet per residential dwelling unit;

- All appurtenances to accessory employee housing structures shall not exceed a fixed ratio of employee housing structure per acre of agricultural land leased to the fee owner of the farm dwelling;
- No fee owner of the farm dwelling shall cause to condominiumize the accessory employee housing structure from the single-family dwelling; and
- No portion of the farm dwelling shall be used for agricultural tourism.

The measure does not address the relationship between the farm and accessory employee housing structures and the uses of and limitations on the latter. There is no limit on the number of accessory employee housing structures and no guidance on who may occupy these accessory employee housing structures.

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

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND PERMITTING
KA 'OIHANA HO'OLĀLĀ A ME NĀ PALAPALA 'AE
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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DAWN TAKEUCHI APUNA
DIRECTOR
PO'O

BRYAN GALLAGHER, P.E.
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O

REGINA MALEPEAI
2ND DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O KUALUA

TESTIMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND PERMITTING
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
and the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

February 12, 2026
Conference Room 225

TO: The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Chair, The Honorable Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment

The Honorable Stanley Chang, Chair, The Honorable Troy N. Hashimoto, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Housing

RE: COMMENTS ON SENATE BILL NO. 2006, RELATING TO FARM EMPLOYEE HOUSING

The Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) **offers comments** on Senate Bill No. 2006, which amends § 205-4.5 by clarifying that a "farm dwelling" permitted in an agricultural district includes a single-family farm dwelling with an accessory employee housing structure, subject to certain restrictions.

While the City is in favor of efforts to support our agricultural industry by allowing flexibility for various forms of housing for farm workers, allowing multi-family dwellings, i.e., an apartment building, without safeguards in place is not in keeping with the desired character and intent of the agricultural district. We note that the amendments to § 205-4.5 appear to be largely consistent with the new farm worker housing use that was added to the City's Land Use Ordinance (LUO) (Revised Ordinances of Honolulu, Chapter 21) under Ordinance 25-2. We also appreciate that the Bill prohibits separating ownership through a condominium property regime and using the farm dwellings for agricultural tourism and as transient vacation rentals.

Specifically, the LUO states that farm worker housing may be composed of multiple single-unit, two-unit, or multi-unit dwellings; one employee and the employee's family or up to three unrelated employees may share one dwelling unit; each dwelling

The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Chair
and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment
The Honorable Stanley Chang, Chair
And Members of the Committee on Housing
Hawai'i State Senate
Senate Bill No. 2006
February 12, 2026
Page 2

unit must not exceed 800 square feet of floor area; and no more than eight dwelling units are allowed in any multi-unit dwelling. The latter is the main difference with the proposed Bill – the LUO provision puts a maximum number of units per structure at eight units, rather than placing a maximum ratio of square feet of agricultural-related structures per acre of agricultural land. We note that this ratio is undetermined in the proposed Bill, and may not be the most appropriate measure since it does not align with the City's zoning regulations.

In summary, we recommend that amendments to Chapter 205 be broad enough to allow consistency with each county's zoning code, without creating conflicting language. The State should provide deference to the counties' localized experience and expertise to ensure that the farm worker housing is justified and, as such, allow the counties to implement further safeguards by requiring a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to ensure bona fide farm worker housing in the agricultural districts.

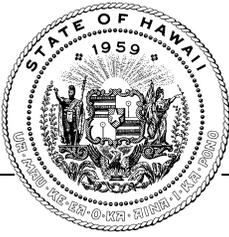
We respectfully offer these comments on Senate Bill No. 2006, and request that it be held in committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Very truly yours,



Dawn Takeuchi Apuna
Director



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF PLANNING
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ALICE EVANS
DIRECTOR

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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

Thursday, February 12, 2026

1:05 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 225

in consideration of
SB 2006
RELATING TO FARM EMPLOYEE HOUSING.

Chairs Gabbard and Chang, Vice Chairs Richards and Hashimoto, and Members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Housing.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports the intent but has some concerns** regarding SB 2006, which amends HRS §205-4.5 (a)(4) to clarify that a farm dwelling permitted in an agricultural district includes a single-family farm dwelling with an accessory employee housing structure.

OPSD supports more farm employee housing on bona fide farms in the State Agricultural District. Farm employee housing helps bona fide farms retain workers and helps to alleviate the state's housing shortage. However, OPSD is concerned that the replacement of "single-family" with "residential" in the definition of "farm dwelling" may be confusing especially since the term "single-family dwelling" is used repeatedly in defining "accessory employee housing." In addition, OPSD believes that adding "farm" to "employee housing" is more accurate than adding "accessory". Attached to our testimony is alternate language for your consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Recommended amendments to HB 1737 for
HRS Sections 205-4.5(a) (4) & 205-2(d) (7)

HRS Section 205-4.5(a) (4)

1 "(4) Farm dwellings, farm employee housing, farm buildings,
2 or activities or uses related to farming and animal
3 husbandry. For the purposes of this paragraph[~~7~~
4 "farm]:

5 (A) "Farm dwelling" means a [~~single-~~
6 ~~family~~] residential dwelling located on and
7 accessory to a farm[~~7~~] where agricultural
8 activity provides income to the family occupying
9 the dwelling, including clusters of [~~single-~~
10 ~~family~~] farm dwellings permitted within
11 agricultural parks developed by the State[~~7~~ ~~or~~
12 ~~where agricultural activity provides income to~~
13 ~~the family occupying the dwelling~~]; and

14 (B) "Farm employee housing" means one or more
15 residential dwelling units accessory to the farm
16 operation that may be attached or detached from
17 the primary farm dwelling; provided that the farm
18 employee housing shall be no larger than eight
19 hundred habitable square feet under roof per
20 residential dwelling unit; provided further that
21 the total land area upon which the farm dwelling,
22 accessory farm employee housing, and all
23 appurtenances are situated shall be no larger
24 than a ratio of square feet per acre of
25 agricultural land leased to the fee owner of the
26 farm dwelling; provided further that no fee owner

1 of the farm dwelling shall submit any portion
2 thereof to a condominium property regime to
3 separate the ownership of the farm employee
4 housing units from the farm dwelling pursuant to
5 chapter 514B; and provided further that no
6 portion of the farm dwelling shall be used for
7 agricultural tourism or related accommodations
8 under paragraph (14);"

HRS Section 205-2(d) (7)

9 "(7) Bona fide agricultural services and uses that support
10 the agricultural activities of the fee or leasehold
11 owner of the property and accessory to any of the
12 above activities, regardless of whether conducted on
13 the same premises as the agricultural activities to
14 which they are accessory, including farm dwellings and
15 farm employee housing as defined in section 205-
16 4.5(a)(4), [~~employee housing,~~] farm buildings, mills,
17 storage facilities, processing facilities,
18 photovoltaic, biogas, and other small-scale renewable
19 energy systems producing energy solely for use in the
20 agricultural activities of the fee or leasehold owner
21 of the property, agricultural-energy facilities as
22 defined in section 205-4.5(a)(17), vehicle and
23 equipment storage areas, and plantation community
24 subdivisions as defined in section 205-4.5(a)(12);"



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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 12, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

TESTIMONY ON SB 2006
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:05 PM

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and Chang, Vice-Chairs Richards and Hashimoto, and Members of the Committees:

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 offers comments on SB 2006, which clarifies that a "farm dwelling" permitted in an agricultural district includes a single-family farm dwelling with an accessory employee housing structure, subject to certain restrictions.

HFB has long supported farm dwellings and accessory employee housing as essential components of viable agricultural operations, particularly to address workforce housing needs in rural communities. On-site housing allows farmers and ranchers to live near their operations, respond to livestock and crop needs, support agricultural workers, deter agricultural crimes, and maintain productive farms, particularly in rural areas where housing options are limited. Farm dwellings and farm worker housing play an important role in sustaining local agricultural production and supporting Hawai'i's agricultural workforce.

At the same time, HFB is concerned about the misuse of agricultural lands for residential purposes that are not tied to bona fide agricultural activity. "Gentleman farms" and dwellings that function primarily as residential units undermine the intent of the Agricultural District, inflate land values, reduce access to land for working farmers, and create conflicts that ultimately harm legitimate agricultural operations. We support appropriate enforcement to address non-bona fide agricultural use and protect the integrity of agricultural lands.

SB 2006 amends HRS §205-4.5(a)(4), which governs permissible uses within the Agricultural District, including farm dwellings. As the Legislature considers changes, HFB urges caution to ensure that new statutory requirements do not unintentionally make it more difficult for bona fide farmers and ranchers to establish or maintain farm dwellings and agricultural worker housing.

We also respectfully note the importance of maintaining the traditional division of responsibilities between the State and the counties. Chapter 205 establishes permissible land uses at the State level, while counties have long been responsible for zoning, building standards, and regulating the size, placement, and design of dwellings through their zoning and permitting processes. Any changes to State law should focus on land-use purposes and agricultural activities, while preserving county authority over zoning and housing standards.

Finally, HFB emphasizes the importance of consistency and clarity in enforcement. Clear, workable standards that distinguish bona fide agricultural operations from non-agricultural use are essential to preventing abuse while ensuring that legitimate farmers are not unfairly burdened.

HFB appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on SB 2006 and looks forward to continued collaboration to support farm dwellings and agricultural workforce housing while protecting Hawai'i's agricultural lands for real, productive agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



 808-733-7060
 808-737-4977

 1259 A'ala Street, Suite 300
Honolulu, HI 96817

February 12, 2026

The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senate Committee of Agriculture and Environment

The Honorable Stanley Chang, Chair
Senate Committee on Housing
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

RE: Senate Bill 2006, Relating to Farm Employee Housing

HEARING: Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 1:05 p.m.

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Chair Chang, and Members of the Joint Committees:

My name is Lyndsey Garcia, Director of Advocacy, testifying on behalf of the Hawai'i Association of REALTORS® ("HAR"), the voice of real estate in Hawaii and its over 10,000 members. HAR **supports** Senate Bill 2006, which clarifies that a "farm dwelling" permitted in an agricultural district includes a single-family farm dwelling with an accessory employee housing structure, subject to certain restrictions.

Hawaii continues to face a housing shortage, including a critical need for workforce housing across many sectors of our economy. This includes farmers and farm workers that play an essential role in maintaining our food security. As such, HAR supports efforts to expand workforce housing.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



Feb. 12, 2026, 1:05 p.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

To: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Sen. Mike Gabbard, Chair
Sen. Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Housing

Sen. Stanley Chang, Chair
Sen. Troy N. Hashimoto, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2006 — RELATING TO FARM EMPLOYEE HOUSING

Aloha chairs, vice chairs and other members of the committees,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** [SB2006](#), which would update the state's definition of "farm dwelling" to include employee housing structures under certain conditions.

Under the bill, an "accessory employee housing structure" could be one or more dwelling units as long as the cumulative habitable square footage of the dwellings does not exceed 800 square feet and no unit is used as a vacation rental.

Grassroot pointed out in its January 2026 policy brief "[How to facilitate more housing for Hawaii farm and ranch workers](#)" that a lack of affordable housing has consistently been cited as a barrier to expanding agricultural production in Hawaii. The report also made clear that there is no statewide standard for how and where farm employee housing can be built.

Approving this bill would give farmers and ranchers an extra tool to help attract and retain workers, because living on the land could minimize commute times and transportation expenses. Consider the following information:

>> Hawaii imports 85-90% of its food supply.¹

>> A 2020 U.S. Department of Agriculture survey found that 41% of the state’s farmers and ranchers cited a lack of labor as a barrier to expanding their operations.²

>> More than 9,500 people in Hawaii were employed as “hired farm labor” in 2023.³

>> Almost half of those people worked on farms and ranches on Hawaii Island alone,⁴ but only one-quarter of Hawaii Island farmers reported hiring labor.

Allowing more housing on farms and ranches, especially for temporary and seasonal workers, would be a win for farm and ranch owners, a win for their employees and a win for everyone who enjoys local food.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

¹ Hannah Leto, Jordan Mitkowski and Katie Hogan et al., “[Agricultural Labor on Hawai’i Island](#),” Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems at Arizona State University, May 2025, p. 1.

² “[Labor Shortage as a Barrier to Agricultural Expansion 2020](#),” Hawaii Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, April 2022.

³ “[Hawaii PYs 2024-2027](#),” Hawaii Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, p. 70.

⁴ Hannah Leto, Jordan Mitkowski and Katie Hogan et al., “[Agricultural Labor on Hawai’i Island](#),” Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems at Arizona State University, May 2025, pp. 4-5.



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Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i

Aloha Chairs Gabbard & Chang, Vice Chairs Richards & Hashimoto, and Committee members,

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 SB2006.**

SB2006 addresses a significant barrier faced by Hawai'i's agricultural sector: the lack of affordable and accessible housing for farm employees. By clarifying that "farm dwellings" can include single-family units with accessory employee housing structures within agricultural districts, the bill provides much-needed support for local farmers.

The high costs of living, especially housing, have historically made it difficult for agricultural operations to compete with other industries in retaining skilled labor. On-site housing not only alleviates commuting burdens but also makes farm employment a more attractive and sustainable option for residents, promoting a stable and dedicated agricultural workforce.

By explicitly prohibiting the use of these units for agricultural tourism and preventing separation via Condominium Property Regime (CPR), SB2006 ensures that agricultural land remains for farming rather than being subdivided for luxury "gentleman estates" or short-term rentals.

Allowing accessory employee housing units of up to 800 square feet, a 40' container, the bill accommodates the operational needs of diverse farming activities that require constant on-site management. This measure supports the growth of local farms, providing a foundation for agriculture to become a sustainable, multi-generational livelihood for Hawai'i's residents.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union

February 12, 2026

TO: Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee on Agriculture & Environment
Chair Chang and Members of the Committee on Housing
RE: SB 2006, Relating to Farm Employee Housing

Dear Chairs Gabbard, Chang, and Committee Members,

Housing Hawai'i's Future is a nonprofit dedicated to creating opportunities for Hawai'i's next generation by ending the workforce housing shortage.

We support Senate Bill 2006. Subject to certain restrictions, this measure clarifies that a farm dwelling in agricultural districts may include an accessory employee housing structure. This clarification addresses an important intersection between agricultural productivity and the urgent need for workforce housing in rural areas.

Allowing accessory employee housing within agricultural districts supports both the agricultural sector and the broader community by enabling farm operators to provide on-site accommodations for their employees. This can help alleviate workforce shortages, reduce commuting barriers, and support the economic vitality of Hawai'i's farms. By providing clear statutory language, this measure can reduce regulatory uncertainty for farmers and landowners, supporting responsible development without undermining the integrity of agricultural districts.

We are grateful for your careful consideration of Senate Bill 2006.

Thank you,



Lee Wang
Executive Director
Housing Hawai'i's Future
lee@hawaiiisfuture.org



Perry Arrasmith
Director of Policy
Housing Hawai'i's Future
perry@hawaiiisfuture.org

SB-2006

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 1:45:03 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/12/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support to include TINY HOMES for single workers

I, Johnnie-Mae L.Perry, Support

2006 SB RELATING TO FARM EMPLOYEE HOUSING.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualii, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Felicia Cowden
Fern Holland
Arryl Kaneshiro



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Jade K. Fountain-Tanigawa, County Clerk
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Telephone: (808) 241-4188
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Email: cokcouncil@kauai.gov

Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

February 10, 2026

TESTIMONY OF ARRYL KANESHIRO
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON
SB 2006, RELATING TO FARM EMPLOYEE HOUSING
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senate Committee on Housing
Thursday, February 12, 2026
1:05 p.m.
Conference Room 225
Via Videoconference

Dear Chair Gabbard, Chair Chang, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2006, Relating to Farm Employee Housing. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council.

This bill amends Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Section 205-4.5(a)(4) to clarify that a "farm dwelling" as permitted in agricultural districts shall include a single-family farm dwelling with an accessory employee housing structure, as appropriately restricted. Such a change is long overdue and will assist generational farmers to fortify operations on their agricultural parcels and retain farm workers without disrupting the character of the district in which they are located.

As Kaua'i continues to face a critical housing shortage, including a great need for workforce housing across many sectors of the community, SB 2006 provides a viable pathway for landowners to provide on-site housing, thereby attracting the talent and retaining a skilled workforce that is housing stable.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2006. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

ARRAYL KANESHIRO
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

RM:dmc

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Vice-Chair
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Tom Cook
Gabe Johnson
Tamara Paltin
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Nohelani U'u-Hodgins



Director of Council Services
David M. Raatz, Jr., Esq.

Deputy Director of Council Services
Richelle K. Kawasaki, Esq.

COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.MauiCounty.us

February 10, 2026

TO: Honorable Mike Gabbard, Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Honorable Stanley Chang, Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Housing

FROM: Nohelani U'u-Hodgins *Nohelani U'u-Hodgins*
Councilmember

DATE: Thursday, February 12, 2026
1:05 p.m., Conference Room 225

SUBJECT: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2006, RELATING TO FARM
EMPLOYEE HOUSING**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure. The purpose of this measure is to clarify that a "farm dwelling" permitted in an agricultural district includes a single-family farm dwelling with an accessory employee housing structure, subject to certain restrictions.

The Maui County Council has not had the opportunity to take a formal position on this measure. Therefore, I am providing this testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

I support this measure for the following reasons:

1. The measure helps farmers provide on-site housing for employees, making it easier to attract and retain agricultural workers.
2. Clarifies that employee housing is an accessory use to bona fide farming and supports working farms without expanding non-agricultural development, helping to preserve agricultural lands.
3. Sets reasonable limits on size, use, and ownership of employee housing to ensure it remains tied to farming operations.

Thank you for your consideration.

SB-2006

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:12:12 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/12/2026 1:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!!

SB-2006

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 4:00:10 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/12/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heather Korotie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on SB2006, Relating to Farm Employee Housing. I am a small-scale farmer and operator of a hosted, farm-based bed and breakfast on agricultural land, and I appreciate the bill’s intent to support housing for agricultural workers.

It makes complete sense that our laws must ensure there is safe, on-site housing for agricultural employees so that genuine farms can function and retain workers. Clarifying that a farm dwelling can include a single-family dwelling with an accessory employee-housing structure, with appropriate restrictions, is a reasonable step in that direction. I support efforts to make it easier for bona fide farms to house the people who do the work of feeding our communities.

At the same time, I urge you not to use SB2006 in a way that further restricts small farms from engaging in modest, hosted agritourism and farm stays that are clearly incidental to active agricultural operations. In 2026, there is an enormous and growing demand for authentic farm stays, place-based travel, and agritourism experiences, both in Hawai‘i and globally. Visitors are actively looking for ways to connect with local food systems, understand how their food is grown, and support small producers directly on the land.

A small farm under two acres cannot realistically survive on agricultural production alone in today’s economy, given land prices, input costs, and our high cost of living. For operations like ours, carefully managed, hosted farm stays are the bridge that makes the underlying agricultural activity economically viable. They allow us to use the farm to its fullest capacity: we grow food, we host guests who learn about and support that work, and we build a diversified revenue stream rooted in genuine agriculture rather than speculative real estate. We should be allowed to have both housing to support agriculture and offer farm stays. Small farms also frequently host agricultural interns and volunteers (often known as WWOOFers), sometimes in tents or alternative structures, which is an extremely common and practical way to support real farm work.

Recent court decisions and county ordinances have already taken a very hard line against short-term vacation rentals in the State Agricultural District, especially unhosted rentals with no real connection to farming. I understand and respect the goal of preventing speculative, non-agricultural development on ag lands, and I agree that purely tourist, non-farm uses should

not displace agriculture. But small, hosted, farm-based lodging that is tightly tied to actual farm activity is fundamentally different from unhosted, speculative short-term rentals.

Right now, the combination of court rulings and new county regulations is closing off multiple paths for small farmers to supplement their income with low-impact, on-farm experiences. SB2006, if interpreted or amended narrowly, risks becoming one more tool to limit the autonomy of small farms to innovate and diversify. The state has several bills and initiatives moving this session that, taken together, push small farms toward an “agriculture-only, no guest income” model that is not financially sustainable for many of us. That is out of step with real-world farm economics and with the strong demand for authentic agritourism.

Accordingly, I respectfully ask the committee to:

1. Make clear in your intent language and committee report that SB2006 is about enabling farm employee housing and not about tightening restrictions on hosted, small-scale farm stays that are clearly secondary and incidental to bona fide agriculture.
2. Avoid adding any language to SB2006 that could be used to further clamp down on small, hosted agritourism operations that help keep working farms in production.
3. Consider future legislation or guidance that explicitly distinguishes between speculative, unhosted short-term rentals and genuine, farm-based, hosted lodging that directly supports active agricultural production and education.

Please do not use this bill to further reinforce limitations on small farms that are trying to survive by combining real agricultural production with educational and experiential farm stays. Instead, allow SB2006 to stand for what its title suggests—supporting farm employee housing—while leaving room in other policy conversations to craft a balanced, farm-friendly approach to agritourism and hosted farm stays.

Mahalo for your consideration and for your work on behalf of Hawai‘i’s farming community.

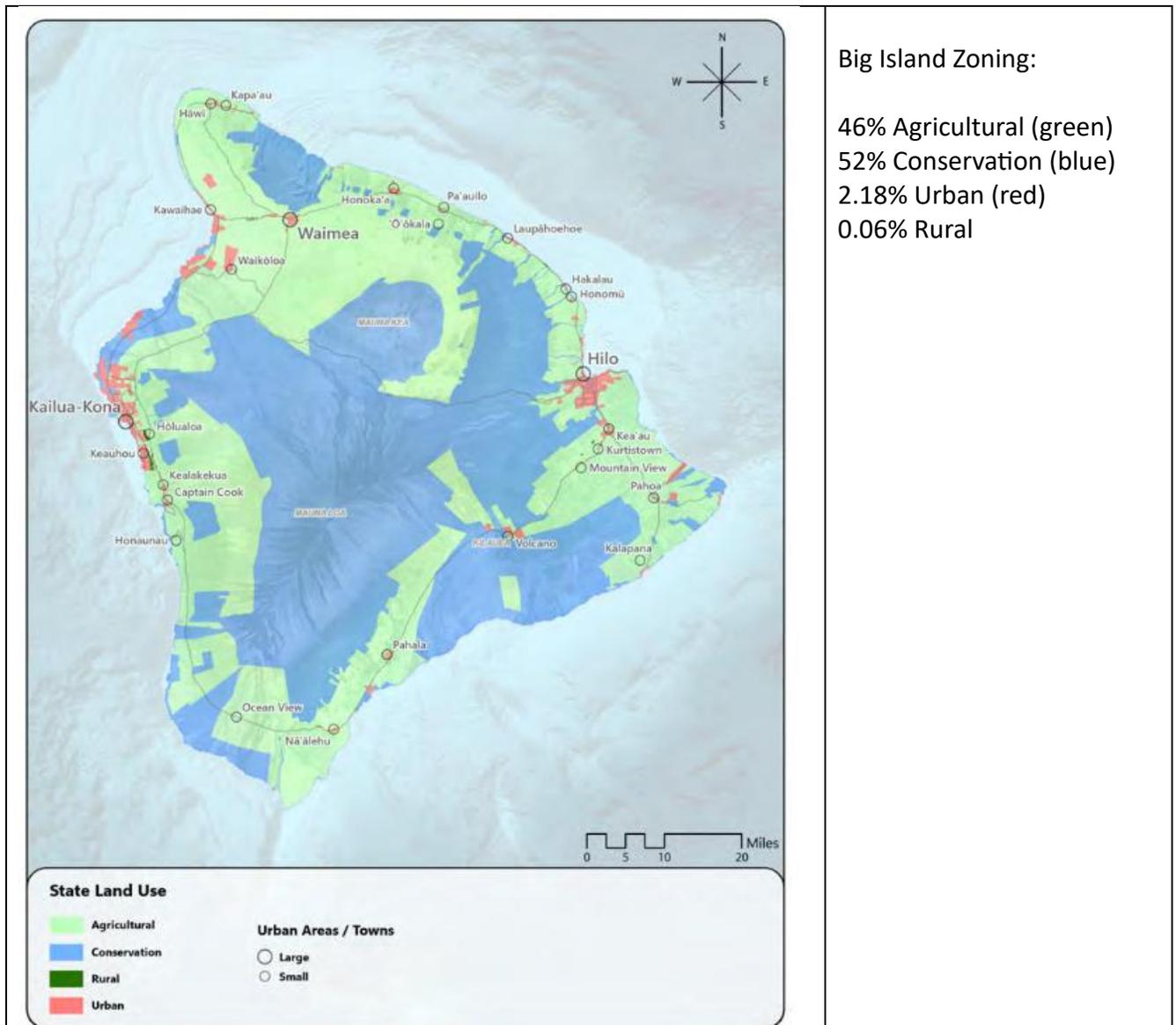
Respectfully submitted,
Heather Korotie
The Mango Farm
South Kona

Aloha Chairs and Members of the AEN and HOU Committees,

Big Island – Agricultural zoning

Looking at the map of the Big Island below, do you think it makes sense to have no vacation rentals in agricultural zoning (green), which represents 45.79% of the island?

Who would benefit? Who would lose? Only 2.18% of the island is zoned urban (red), which includes resort, commercial and residential zoning. The reality on the ground is that the majority of families on the Big Island live on lots zoned agricultural. Historically agricultural zoning had been abused as a default, to help subdivision developers avoid infrastructure development costs and to create subdivisions with many small lots for property tax harvesting. Many lots would never be viable for farming or are simply too small.



Effects of SB2006 on the Big Island

The effect of this bill on the Big Island would be that 7 of 9 districts will be cut off from the tourism economy and no local family can own a vacation rental. Resort zoned vacation rentals are concentrated in only 2 districts and tend to be multi-million dollar investment homes for off-island owners, unaffordable and unreachable to local residents.

Furthermore, if this blanket prohibition of vacation rentals on agricultural land would be used to shutdown existing vacation rentals, this will devastate many farmers and families on the Big Island. I don't think people understand how devastating this would be for the rural areas of the Big Island, where no alternative industries or jobs exist. Vacation rentals are a key economic driver in many areas of this very large island. Visitors shop at our farmers markets, shops and restaurants.

If the State is serious about supporting small scale farming for food sustainability, vacation rentals are a great way to make small farms financially viable. Most farms are not profitable and can hardly stay afloat. Building additional dwelling units has become very expensive. How would a local farmer be able to afford building additional housing? Especially if you are taking away an additional income stream? This might work for wealthy gentleman farmers or "luxury" farm developments who have figured out how to game the system (ie Ouli "Farms", Hokulia).

It's hard to make a living as a farmer on the Big Island. Farmers need MORE support and options to make their farm financially sustainable, not less. Opening regulations to allow for additional housing is good but will not help in reality, if economic conditions don't support it and nobody can afford to build. Unfortunately, HB1737 has the potential to inflict great harm to many families on the Big Island and their ability to make a living here.

Thank you for your careful consideration,
Penny Lee

SB-2006

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 12:10:29 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/12/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
richard liebmann	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha State Legislators,

I am strongly oppsed to SB2006.

My background:

I am 75 years old and having been farming in Hawi since 2003. I am now retired

For many years I supplied the North Kohala community with fresh organic fruits and vegetables through our weekly farmers market and direct sales to the local food stores all produced on my 10 acre farm.

I have heard over the years from government officials how important local food production is to the food security of the state of Hawaii. Time and time again these words have fallen short in implementation of these vital goals. This bill is the latest example of talking the talk but not walking the walk.

Supplemental income from short term rentals is vital as profit from farming alone is often insufficient.

Denying supplemental income to real farmers in the name of protecting and encouraging farming is beyond stupid. The model of agrotourism with overnight accommodations has proven throughout the word to be an effective tool to encourage farmers to keep farming and preserving productive farm lands.

Rather than a more focused approach of qualifying farmers (as is being implemented by the property tax division on the big island) outlawing supplemental income through agrotourism and specifically overnite rentals across the entire state will result in less local food production not more and less food security.

Wake up before the food crisis state officials are so verbal to point out, comes true. The powerful hotel lobby should not dictate this common sense approach that will allow farmers to keep on farming because they are supplementing their modest farming income with the proven agrotourism of overnight stays.

Aloha,

Richard Liebmann

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