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STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HUI HO'OUULU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
TOURISM

February 5, 2026

1:00 p.m.

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 2170
RELATING TO THE NORTH KOHALA KYNNERSLY EAST SITE LAND PARCEL

Chairperson DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of SB2170**, which authorizes the purchase of agricultural land in North Kohala.

This measure represents a strategic investment in Hawai'i's long-term food security, institutional procurement goals, economic diversification, and agricultural export potential.

The purchase of agricultural land in North Kohala directly supports the State's food security and local production mandates, including efforts to increase the share of locally produced food used by public institutions. By expanding the land base available for diversified crop production, the State strengthens its ability to:

- Supply locally grown foods to schools and other public institutions.
- Support the Hawai'i Department of Education's school meal programs with consistent, Hawai'i-grown products; and
- Align agricultural production with predictable, long-term institutional demand.

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North Kohala's climate, soils, and growing conditions make it well-suited for diversified agriculture that can contribute meaningfully to these goals.

Hawai'i's economy remains heavily dependent on tourism and construction. Investment in agricultural land helps rebalance the State's economic portfolio by:

- Creating stable, rural-based jobs in farming, processing, and logistics.
- Supporting small and mid-sized agricultural enterprises; and
- Encouraging value-added agricultural activities that retain more economic benefit within the State.

By maintaining land in agricultural production, the State also protects long-term economic capacity rather than allowing conversion to non-agricultural uses.

North Kohala also presents opportunities for the development of export-oriented agriculture. With sufficient land base and coordinated management, the region can support:

- Scaled production of high value crops;
- Development of branded Hawai'i agricultural products; and
- Linkages between on-farm production, processing, and off-island markets.

Export-oriented agriculture allows Hawai'i to capture additional value from its unique growing conditions and reputation for quality products, while strengthening the resilience of the agricultural sector overall.

Public acquisition of agricultural land ensures that these lands remain dedicated to agricultural purposes and can be planned and managed to serve broader public goals, including:

- Long-term agricultural productivity.
- Food system resilience.
- Institutional food supply stability.
- Rural economic development; and
- Stewardship of critical land and water resources.

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This approach allows the State to move beyond fragmented landownership toward coordinated agricultural development that benefits farmers and the public alike.

Available soil and crop suitability data indicates that the subject lands are appropriate for diversified agricultural production:

- **Soil Class:** C
- **Estimated Crop Suitability:** Citrus, avocado, coffee, dryland taro, sweet potato, cucumber, melons, zucchini, eggplant, peppers, and tomato.

This range of suitable crops supports both local food production for institutional markets and the potential development of higher-value specialty crops for export markets, strengthening the economic and food security rationale for acquisition.

SB2170 is a forward-looking investment in Hawai'i's future. By acquiring agricultural land in North Kohala, the State strengthens its ability to:

- Meet food production and institutional purchasing mandates.
- Support the Hawai'i Department of Education's school meal programs.
- Diversify the economy beyond tourism; and
- Develop new agricultural export opportunities.

For these reasons, we urge your favorable consideration of SB2170.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



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Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice-Chair Wakai, 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 SB 2170, which authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds for the Agribusiness Development Corporation to purchase the North Kohala Kynnersly East Site Land Parcel for agricultural development.

Access to affordable, long-term agricultural land remains one of the most significant barriers facing farmers and ranchers in Hawai'i. Strategic acquisition of private agricultural lands by the State, through ADC, is an important tool to ensure that these lands remain dedicated to agricultural use and are protected from conversion to non-agricultural purposes. State acquisition can also help prevent speculative use of agricultural lands that undermines bona fide farming and ranching.

ADC was created to help transition Hawai'i's agricultural industry following the decline of plantation agriculture and has played a critical role in managing agricultural lands, developing irrigation systems, and supporting diversified agriculture across the State. ADC is uniquely positioned to oversee the acquisition, management, and responsible development of agricultural lands in a manner that supports active production and long-term agricultural viability.

The North Kohala region offers significant potential for agricultural production and rural economic development. Investment in this land supports small and family-run farming operations, strengthens local food production, and aligns with the State's broader goals of food security, agricultural sustainability, and rural community resilience.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.