



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 Higher Education
Wednesday, March 25, 2026 at 2:10 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

SB 2320 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 2320 SD1 HD1 relating to Agriculture which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program to create career pipelines in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology. Requires the University of Hawai'i (UH) to collaborate with the Department of Education (DOE), Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB), Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC), Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR), and appropriate community organizations to develop and administer the program. Require reports to the Legislature and appropriates funds.

In 2024, University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) leadership and faculty engaged in college-wide strategic planning to advance Hawai'i's agriculture, build local self-sufficiency, boosting selective exports of value-added products, preparing the agricultural workforce, improving ecosystem health, and promoting community prosperity and wellbeing. One of the priority focus areas for CTAHR was workforce development to attract new generations to agriculture through innovative education, training, and support programs that create a formal pipeline that connects Hawai'i's high school and community college students to CTAHR and ultimately to the local agricultural workforce. CTAHR has collaborated with DOE about its efforts involving early college credits through the CTAHR Summer Research Institute and specific introductory courses such as Introduction to Natural Resources and Environment (NREM 192) and Agriculture, Environment and Society (TPSS 200). A recent focus with workforce readiness is CTAHR's 3-year degree which will involve learning by doing through practical, hands-on-training and creating experiential learning opportunities connecting students with producers at its Waimānalo, Kapa'a, Kula, Waimea, and Kona CARES centers as regional hubs in every county. CTAHR is also collaborating with DOE on professional development for educators and to create online micro credentials to keep Ag-educators updated on new technologies; and developing programs for farm managers and agricultural professions. CTAHR has the instructional

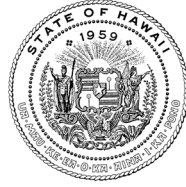
expertise in GIS and remote sensing, drone operations and other AI technology, and agricultural engineering for best management practices and reduction of costs of production.

CTAHR supports the State's food security and economic diversification goals and is committed to its continuous collaboration with DOE, DAB, ADC, DLIR, UH School of Hawaiian Knowledge and other community organizations with assisting students and agricultural entrepreneurs learn, thrive, and be culturally informed. The appropriation in SB 2320 SD1 HD1 will support statewide community assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

March 25, 2026

To: The Honorable Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
The Honorable Terez Amato, Vice Chair and
Members of the House Committee on Higher Education

Date: Wednesday, March 25, 2026
Time: 2:10 p.m.
Place: Conference Room 309, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: S.B. 2320 SD1 HD1 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

The **DLIR supports** this measure provided it does not conflict with the priorities identified in the Governor's Executive Supplemental Budget request. DLIR will defer to the University of Hawaii (UH) as the lead agency on internal implementation matters and bill language should the measure continue through the legislative process.

The department notes growing student interest in agricultural careers and hopes this measure will provide the catalyst to expand agricultural science and technology education at both the college and high school levels.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.

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JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



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
HIGHER EDUCATION
March 25, 2026
2:10 p.m.
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 2320, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairperson Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) supports S.B. 2320, SD1, HD1, which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program to create clear career pathways in agriculture and agricultural technology.

ADC supports the bill's collaborative, multi-agency approach, bringing together the University of Hawai'i, Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, ADC, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and community partners. Coordinated efforts across these entities will be important to align education, workforce development, and industry needs.

Developing accessible and well-supported career pathways is essential to strengthening Hawai'i's agricultural workforce, supporting local food production, and advancing innovation in the sector.

For these reasons, favorable consideration of S.B. 2320, SD1, HD1, is respectfully requested. This testimony may be further amended or refined following review by the Agribusiness Development Corporation Board at its March 31 meeting.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 03/25/2026

Time: 02:10 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: HED

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB2320, HD1, RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program to create career pipelines in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology. Requires the University of Hawaii to collaborate with the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Agribusiness Development Corporation, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and appropriate community organizations to develop and administer the program. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) offers comments on SB 2320, SD 1, HD 1, which establishes a Kuleana Agtech Pathways Program designed to cultivate a skilled, culturally grounded, and resilient agricultural workforce for Hawai'i.

The Department recognizes the need to strengthen the pipeline to the agriculture workforce to support Hawai'i's goal to be self-sustaining and understands the value of integrating Native Hawaiian agriculture, regenerative practices, aquaculture, agroforestry, and entrepreneurship to foster a workforce that is both technically proficient and deeply connected to Hawai'i's culture. The Department remains committed to working with the University of Hawai'i (UH); the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity; the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism and its Agribusiness Development Corporation; the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations; and community stakeholder groups to design work-based learning opportunities in authentic workplace settings and to ensure the curriculum and instruction delivered in the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources career pathway is aligned with current and emerging industry standards and practices.

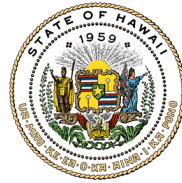
The components of the Kuleana Agtech Pathways Program provided in Section 2(c) aligns with the Department's efforts to prepare students for the current and future agriculture workforce, including instruction in agricultural technology (agtech), professional development for educators, and student internship opportunities. Partnering with UH to offer high school students dual credit courses and certificate programs in agriculture and agtech and to establish agtech regional hubs to provide students with hands-on, community-based educational activities will advance student learning and promote the desired pipeline to workforce.

The Department defers to the University of Hawai'i regarding the establishment and implementation of the Kuleana Agtech Pathways Program outlined in Section 2.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure and for your continued support in the Department's workforce development efforts.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
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
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9560 FAX: (808) 973-9613

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

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026
2:10 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 309 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2320, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testify on Senate Bill No. 2320, SD1, HD1, relating to agriculture. This measure establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Pilot Program to create career pipelines in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology; requires the University of Hawaii to collaborate with the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department), Agribusiness Development Corporation, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and appropriate community organizations to develop and administer the program; requires reports to the Legislature; appropriates funds; and is effective 7/1/3000. The Department supports this measure.

The Department believes that any measure that creates clear pathways into careers in agriculture and agriculture technology are critical to ensuring food security and biosecurity for the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

March 25, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

TESTIMONY ON SB 2320, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
2:10 PM

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice-Chair Amato, 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 2320, SD1, HD1, which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program within the University of Hawai'i to expand agricultural science and technology career pathways across the State.

Hawai'i's agricultural industry faces ongoing workforce shortages and an aging farmer population. Developing clear and structured pathways for students to enter agricultural careers is essential to ensuring the long-term viability of local food production and biosecurity efforts. Strengthening coordination between public schools, the University of Hawai'i system, and industry partners will help build a skilled workforce prepared for the evolving needs of modern agriculture.

Agriculture today requires knowledge of technology, resource management, business planning, and environmental stewardship. Providing students with hands-on training, internship opportunities, dual-credit pathways, and exposure to emerging agricultural technologies will better align education with real-world workforce demands. Programs that integrate classroom learning with practical farm experience help students see agriculture as a viable and innovative career choice.

HFB supports efforts that create statewide consistency while allowing regional flexibility to address the unique agricultural characteristics of each island. Partnerships between educators, producers, and industry stakeholders will be critical to ensure that training programs reflect actual workforce needs.

SB 2320, SD1, HD1 represents a positive investment in the next generation of farmers, ranchers, agricultural technicians, and biosecurity professionals. Building a strong agricultural workforce pipeline strengthens Hawai'i's food security and economic resilience.

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



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2320 SD1 HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Ho‘ona‘auao Kula Nui
(House Committee on Higher Education)
Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 25, 2026

2:10 pm

Lumi 309

Aloha e Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato and Members of the House Committee on Higher Education:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB2320 SD1 HD1**, which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program in the University of Hawai‘i system to strengthen Hawai‘i’s agriculture workforce through culturally grounded, island-based career pathways that begin in high school and continue into post-secondary education and employment.

The provisions of **SB2320 SD1 HD1** are consistent with OHA’s prior work recognizing that cultivating new farmers requires sustained, mentored pathways rather than short-term exposure. The Taro Security and Purity Task Force’s 2010 report, prepared with community input statewide and supported by OHA, emphasized that “a taro farmer is not created in a single semester or class,” and encouraged linked classroom and field opportunities that allow learners to carry credits across programs and build a full track of study.¹ The Task Force further recommended expanding agricultural and cultural apprenticeships and mentorships that place learners with experienced farmers for meaningful durations, noting that short-term apprenticeships can be inefficient for farmers because of the time and attention required to train participants.²

This measure’s dual-credit structure to allow early access to resources by high school students, internship/apprenticeship opportunities, and high school career and technical education components directly align with these recommendations and provide a framework to normalize long-term mentorship and practice-based learning within public education systems. The Task Force Report also called for developing a pipeline of youth education programs, scholarships, internships, and apprenticeships to “grow” new farmers

¹ Taro Security and Purity Task Force, *E ola hou ke kalo; ho‘i hou ka ‘āina lē‘ia: 2010 Legislative Report* (Dec. 29, 2009), at 62.

² *Id.* and n.101

within local communities, and for establishing career or study tracks in Hawaiian agriculture within the university system.³ This measure advances that infrastructure by starting early, reducing barriers, and connecting students to real farm settings and credentialed pathways.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. For these reasons, OHA respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS SB2320 SD1 HD1**.

³ Taro Security and Purity Task Force, *2010 Legislative Report*, at 48.



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 309
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026 AT 2:10 P.M.**

To The Honorable Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
The Honorable Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Higher Education

SUPPORT SB2320 SD1 HD1 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

The Maui Chamber of Commerce supports SB 2320 SD1 HD1, which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program within the University of Hawai'i to expand agricultural science and technology career pathways across the State.

A strong and sustainable agricultural sector is critical to Maui County's and the State of Hawaii's economic diversification, food security, and resilience. Like many industries across our islands, agriculture faces persistent workforce shortages and an aging farmer population. Creating clear, accessible pathways for students to pursue careers in agriculture and ag technology is essential to strengthening this sector for the long term.

We support efforts to better align education with workforce needs by enhancing coordination between K–12 schools, the University of Hawai'i system, and industry partners. Programs that provide hands-on learning, internships, dual-credit opportunities, and exposure to modern agricultural technologies will help prepare students for the realities of today's agricultural economy while positioning agriculture as a viable, innovative, and rewarding career path.

We recognize the value of establishing regional hubs, which can ensure that training and opportunities are accessible to students across the islands, including rural and underserved communities. This approach supports equitable participation and helps cultivate a new generation of local agricultural leaders who are rooted in Hawai'i's unique environmental and cultural context.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

SB-2320-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 9:59:33 AM

Testimony for HED on 3/25/2026 2:10:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Comment regarding funding/appropriates funds

IRAN WAR IS COSTING TAXPAYERS 1BILLION \$ A DAY!!

LEGISLATURE MUST BE FISCAL RESPONSIBLE THIS SESSION IN MEASURES
SEEKING FUNDINGS.

2320 SB RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

SB-2320-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 4:37:37 PM

Testimony for HED on 3/25/2026 2:10:00 PM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!! MAHALO!

March 22, 2026

To: Chair Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and the House Committee on Higher Education

Subject: **SB2320 SD1 HD1**, Relating to Agriculture

Aloha,

My name is Sydney Haas and I am a farmer in Hale'iwa. **I am writing in support of SB2320 SD1 HD1**, which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program that will create career pipelines in agriculture and agriculture tech. Not only could this bill help provide career opportunities in these fields, but it can also help create means to revitalize Hawai'i's agriculture economy.

Between 2017 and 2022, the number of farms in Hawai'i declined by over 10%, and the average farmer age now exceeds 60. The reduction in the number of farms is troubling as Hawai'i remains dependent on imports to feed our communities, and therefore is also vulnerable to disruptions in the supply chain when faced with economic or environmental disasters. Without effective and organized pathways for younger generations to enter agriculture, we risk continued weakening of local agricultural production and food system resiliency.

SB2320 SD1 HD1 addresses this challenge by:

- Expanding agricultural science and technology into high school and UH Career and Technical Education programs.
- Training students in high-demand skills such as GIS, drone operations, climate-smart farming, and agricultural data systems.
- Creating internships, apprenticeships, and dual-credit opportunities with local farms and businesses.
- Establishing regional AgTech hubs aligned with each county's needs.

I urge the committee to pass SB2320 SD1 HD1 to establish the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program. This program bridges cultural stewardship with modern agricultural tools, preparing the next generation to care for the 'āina while strengthening Hawai'i's food security and workforce resilience. The model would provide an opportunity to perpetuate, and transform, traditional Hawaiian agricultural knowledge across generations while prioritizing the needs of both 'āina and community.

Mahalo to the committees for the opportunity to testify,

Sydney Haas