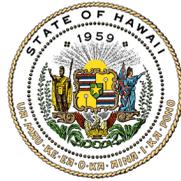


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



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

SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

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

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT AND
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2026, 3:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2350
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards and Wakai and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2350 that transfers the Agricultural Development Division and Aquaculture and Livestock Support Services Branch from the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to the Agribusiness Development Corporation. The Department strongly opposes this bill.

The Agricultural Development Division is responsible for agricultural marketing and statistics. These functions work closely with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service for specialty Crop Block Grant Program, USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service for the Market Access Program to expand export markets and the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service to provide critical statistical information to ranchers and farmers. The Division also works synergistically with the Department's Agricultural Loan Program and the Agricultural Resource Management Division to provide comprehensive service to the agriculture industry.

The Aquaculture and Livestock Support Services provide support for aquaculture and livestock businesses through planning, coordination, counseling and information. The branch plays a significant role in aquaculture development and works closely with the Agricultural Loan Division to provide financing for aquaculture operations and with the Department's Aquatic Unit's veterinarian for disease surveillance and investigations. The ability for the development function and the regulatory function to work together and advocate for aquaculture is essential and if the transfer is to occur the aquaculture regulatory function should also be transferred.

Testimony of Sharon Hurd

February 6, 2026

Page 2

The Department overall has concerns that the loss of synergy within the economic development functions of the department may result in less support for the agricultural and aquaculture industries and hinder the Department from reaching the goal of doubling local food production. In addition, transferring agreements from Federal Agencies to the Agribusiness Development Corporation may require federal approval, which is not under the control of the department.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
and the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

February 6, 2026
3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 2350
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairpersons Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice Chair Richards and Wakai, and
Members of the Committee:

We are writing to submit **comments** on the proposed transfer of the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity's Aquaculture and Livestock Support Services to the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC). This transition represents a strategic opportunity to strengthen Hawaii's food production systems, expand export capacity, and advance long-term economic, environmental, and social benefits for the State.

It is important to clarify that ADC's interest is limited to the commercial and industry development functions associated with aquaculture and livestock support services. ADC does not seek to assume regulatory authority related to animal health, biosecurity enforcement, inspections, or permitting compliance, which appropriately remain within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity. This proposal is focused on strengthening business development, infrastructure planning, and industry expansion capacity, not regulatory oversight.

As Hawai'i works to increase local food production, enhance biosecurity, and grow high-value agricultural exports, it is increasingly clear that technical and regulatory support alone is not sufficient. Producers, particularly in aquaculture and livestock—also require coordinated business development capacity, including market analysis, infrastructure planning, capital formation, and public-private partnership development. ADC's statutory mission and operating model are uniquely suited to deliver this integrated approach. Unlike regulatory agencies, ADC's strength lies in its ability to acquire land, develop shared-use infrastructure, finance and manage facilities, and structure public-private partnerships that reduce risk for industry investors. These tools are essential for scaling aquaculture and livestock enterprises but are not functions traditionally performed by regulatory agencies.

A critical and persistent challenge facing Hawai'i's aquaculture and livestock industries is access to suitable space to grow—whether for production, processing, research and development, or value-added activities. Limited availability of appropriately zoned land, specialized facilities, and supporting infrastructure has constrained expansion and discouraged private investment.

For several years, the Legislature has asked ADC and DBEDT to articulate a coordinated strategy to anchor and expand Hawai'i's aquaculture industry. While the need and opportunity are clear, ADC currently lacks the dedicated staff capacity and program resources required to develop and execute a comprehensive statewide industry development strategy. Without this capacity, the State remains reactive rather than strategic in supporting aquaculture growth.

ADC has clear statutory authority to acquire, hold, develop, and manage land, buildings, and infrastructure in support of agricultural development. Locating aquaculture and livestock support services within ADC would allow the State to more strategically plan for and invest in facilities and sites that enable industry growth, including shared-use infrastructure, innovation and incubation spaces, and production-ready lands. This capability directly supports industry

scaling, reduces barriers to entry, and strengthens Hawai'i's competitiveness in domestic and export markets.

Transferring aquaculture and livestock support services to ADC would also strengthen coordination among the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism's attached agencies and divisions, including the Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority (NELHA), the Office of Planning & Sustainable Development, and the Land Use Commission. ADC, NELHA, HTDC executed a Memorandum of Agreement in 2024 to better coordinate statewide aquaculture planning, infrastructure development, and commercialization pathways. Locating industry development functions within ADC strengthens the State's ability to align land-based and ocean-based aquaculture strategies under a coordinated framework.

This alignment creates a strong platform for collaboration in support of a Blue Ocean Economy directive—integrating aquaculture, renewable energy, innovation, land-use planning, and export-oriented economic development. ADC's land and infrastructure authority, combined with NELHA's ocean-based research and commercialization expertise and the planning and permitting roles of the Office of Planning & Sustainable Development and the Land Use Commission, would foster a more coordinated, predictable, and investment-ready environment for aquaculture and livestock enterprises statewide.

From an economic perspective, this approach supports scalable food production, expands export capacity, attracts private investment, and creates stable jobs in rural and coastal communities. Environmentally, coordinated land, water, and ocean-based planning promotes sustainable resource use and climate resilience. Socially, expanding aquaculture and livestock production strengthens food security, supports local producers, and reinforces agriculture and ocean industries as viable long-term career pathways for Hawai'i's residents.

To ensure that aquaculture perspectives are consistently represented as these programs evolve, we respectfully recommend that one of ADC's At-Large Board member seats be designated for a representative of the aquaculture

industry. This representation would provide essential sector-specific insight and help guide policy and investment decisions aligned with industry needs and Blue Ocean Economy objectives.

The addition of five (5) full-time equivalent positions is not program expansion for its own sake, but rather foundational capacity necessary to responsibly absorb transferred functions and, critically, to allow ADC to finally develop and execute a coordinated aquaculture and livestock industry development strategy for the State. Without these administrative and program support resources, ADC cannot deliver the planning, project development, and interagency coordination expected by the Legislature. In summary, transferring Aquaculture and Livestock Support Services to ADC—paired with ADC's land and infrastructure authorities, enhanced inter-agency collaboration, appropriate governance representation, and adequate staffing—offers a forward-looking, systems-based approach to advancing Hawai'i's food production, export capacity, and Blue Ocean Economy goals.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to share these comments. We would be pleased to discuss this recommendation further at your convenience.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



Benson Medina
Director

Dennis Lin
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

25 Aupuni Street, Room 1301 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720-4252
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February 4, 2026
HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Friday, February 6, 2026
3:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224

TESTIMONY ON SB 2350: Relating to Agriculture

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Richards, Vice Chair Wakai and Members of the Committees,

I am Benson Medina, Director of the Department of Research and Development, County of Hawai'i. One of the agricultural objectives of this department is to support research, development, control, and education that improves agricultural production, quality, resilience, and producer viability. The County of Hawai'i provides **written comments on SB2350** to transfer oversight of the Aquaculture and Livestock Support Services (ALSS) Branch and the Agricultural Development Division (ADD) of the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

Hawai'i County has 3,638 farms and 20+ farming associations that fall under and utilize services related to the Agricultural Development Division, while ADC assets in Hawai'i County are still in development. We ask that any decision of whether to transfer ADD is made after further input from Hawai'i island stakeholders and thorough consideration of any potential impacts on producers and associations.

Additionally, we request the committee take into consideration the statutes of each department and assess if transferring any of the programs that ADD administers to ADC would affect the ability of the state to administer these programs. Given that more than \$8 million in federal funds were administered through ADD in 2023-2024 (HDOA, 2024), it is important that producers do not lose opportunities because of a loss of capacity within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to receive federal funding opportunities. The Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program, a USDA program to build resilience in the middle of the food supply chain, states: "eligible entities are departments of agriculture in States and Territories," (USDA). Given the current economic disruptions affecting producers, please consider possible interruptions to crucial funding streams resulting from a transfer. Thank you for championing agriculture in Hawai'i and for the opportunity to provide comments on SB2350.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B Medina".

Benson Medina
Director



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

February 6, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

TESTIMONY ON SB 2350
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
3:00 PM

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Wakai, 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 respectfully opposes SB 2350. HFB appreciates the Legislature's continued focus on strengthening aquaculture and agricultural development in Hawai'i and recognizes stakeholders' interest in improving the delivery of programs and services to producers.

As written, SB 2350 proposes transferring the Aquaculture and Livestock Support Services Branch and the Agricultural Development Division (ADD) from the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to the Agribusiness Development Corporation. HFB notes that this represents a significant structural reorganization of the State's agricultural framework, rather than a targeted programmatic change.

HFB is concerned that the bill does not include findings or a clear statement of purpose explaining the specific problems this reorganization is intended to address, how success would be measured, or how services to farmers and ranchers would be improved. Absent this information, it is difficult to fully evaluate the potential impacts on producers, agency coordination, and long-term agricultural policy.

HFB also respectfully notes the broader precedent such a reorganization could establish. Transferring core agricultural functions from the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to other agencies raises important questions about the future structure and role of the Department as a whole. HFB believes these questions merit careful

consideration to avoid unintended consequences and fragmentation of agricultural governance.

HFB values its partnerships across the agricultural community and recognizes that different stakeholders may have differing experiences with existing programs. From HFB's perspective, any proposal to restructure state agricultural agencies should be grounded in clear data, transparent analysis, and a well-defined transition plan to ensure continuity of services and minimize disruption to producers.

HFB looks forward to continued discussion with the Legislature, state agencies, and stakeholders as this measure is considered, and respectfully offers these comments for the committee's consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Officers

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State President

Christian Zuckerman
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Chapter Presidents

Kelii Gannet
Kohala, Hawai'i

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Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahālāwai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Kilia Avelino-Purdy
Moloka'i

Negus Manna
Lāna'i

India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Rachel LaDrig
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i

Aloha Chairs Gabbard & DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards & Wakai, 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 provides comments on SB2350.**

SB2350 offers a strategic reorganization of agricultural oversight in Hawaii, promising enhanced efficiencies and focused support for our farmers. By transferring the oversight of the Aquaculture and Livestock Support Services Branch as well as the Agricultural Development Division to the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC), the bill intends to streamline operations and consolidate expertise in a way that better aids the state's agricultural community. This shift enhances the ability of these sectors to access the specialized resources and support they need to thrive. The Agribusiness Development Corporation is positioned to provide more targeted oversight and resources, which is crucial for addressing the unique challenges faced by aquaculture and livestock industries in Hawaii. This will allow these branches to innovate and adapt in a rapidly evolving agricultural landscape, ultimately benefiting local farmers and the agricultural economy at large.

Furthermore, SB2350 recognizes the growing importance of biosecurity measures amidst global climate challenges and increasing pest invasions. By consolidating biosecurity oversight under a single entity, the bill facilitates improved coordination and communication, bolstering our capacity to protect Hawaii's unique ecosystems and agricultural outputs. This structural reorganization can lead to more prompt and coordinated responses to biosecurity threats, safeguarding both the agricultural industry and the natural environment. By reallocating responsibilities, the state can more effectively focus on priority areas, driving sustainable growth and ensuring that Hawaii's agriculture remains vibrant and resilient for future generations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union

SB-2350

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 5:06:20 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/6/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cathy Goeggel	Testifying for Animal Rights Hawai'i	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

We oppose this transfer because Agribusiness Development Corp. has a long, tainted history, and should be dissolved. We feel that beaurocratic oversight of agriculture in Hawai'i has created swollen agencies such as ADC, which do nothing positive or farmers. Please table SB2350.
Mahalo



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH COMMENTS

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

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

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

SB 2350 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

by
Dick Jones, HAAA Executive Director

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

My name is Dick Jones, and I serve as Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Aquaculture and Aquaponics Association. HAAA represents commercial aquaculture producers, researchers, and allied businesses across the State of Hawai‘i.

HAAA submits this testimony in support of SB 2350, with comments.

Aquaculture is a meaningful and growing part of Hawai‘i’s agricultural economy. State data show that aquaculture generates hundreds of millions of dollars in annual economic activity, supports well over a thousand direct jobs, and contributes significantly to rural employment, food security, and local supply chains. The industry spans finfish, shellfish, algae, hatcheries, and advanced technologies, and it requires long-term planning horizons and capital investment to succeed.

For these reasons, Hawai‘i’s aquaculture industry depends on clear governance, consistent oversight, and long-term certainty. HB1606 presents an opportunity to better align the State’s aquaculture development, land management, and industry support functions in a way that supports long-term growth.

From a strategic and economic development perspective, consolidation makes sense. A significant portion of Hawai‘i’s aquaculture industry is already operating within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism through the Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai‘i Authority. The Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation and its Small Business Innovation Research program, both housed within DBEDT, serve as the State’s lead platforms for technology innovation, an area in which aquaculture has been particularly active. In addition,

the Agribusiness Development Corporation already administers land and leases for aquaculture operations, including a large-scale tenant on Kauaʻi.

Bringing aquaculture development, land management, and support services into closer alignment under a single department focused on economic development and innovation has the potential to improve coordination, reduce fragmentation, and support more effective long-term planning. At the same time, HAAA recognizes the importance of maintaining specialized functions, such as aquatic animal health and import regulation, within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, where that expertise is best supported.

From an industry standpoint, the potential value of this bill lies in whether it results in clearer accountability, better defined roles and responsibilities, and a more responsive structure for supporting aquaculture statewide. Producers have raised important questions about how existing lands, leases, approvals, and agreements would be administered under any new structure. These questions are not theoretical. They go directly to land tenure security, continuity, and the ability of existing operations to continue without disruption.

Aquaculture requires secure land tenure and long-term stability. Any transfer of authority or responsibility must clearly protect existing approvals, leases, negotiated terms, and pending agreements, and must recognize aquaculture as a distinct agricultural use with long-term leasing needs, as specifically provided for in HRS. Without that clarity, uncertainty alone can delay investment, slow expansion, and limit the industry's ability to contribute to Hawai'i's economy.

HAAA believes it is important for industry to remain engaged as this bill moves through the legislative process. Industry participation will be essential to identifying necessary refinements and ensuring that implementation supports, rather than disrupts, existing operations and future development.

In closing, HAAA supports SB 2350 as a proposal worth advancing for continued discussion and refinement, with the understanding that industry concerns must be addressed clearly and transparently as the bill progresses. We look forward to working with the Legislature, the Agribusiness Development Corporation, the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, and DBEDT to ensure that any changes strengthen Hawai'i's aquaculture sector and support long-term economic growth.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,
Dick Jones
Executive Director
Hawai'i Aquaculture and Aquaponics Association

SB-2350

Submitted on: 2/5/2026 3:00:34 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/6/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jim WYBAN	Testifying for HIplan	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chairman

I earned my PHD at UH Manoa and developed the SPF Shrimp Broodstock industry which generates \$20M in exports per year. This industry was a direct result of State & Federal R&D funding. Aquaculture has done amazingly well in Hawaii & generates \$80M/yr in revenues. Aquaculture deserves for more attention than it receives. I strongly support transfer of Aquaculture from DOA to ADC.

Sincerely,

Jim Wyban PhD



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair

Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair

Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

SB2350

RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Thursday, January 5, 2026, 9:30am
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference

Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards and Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **opposes SB2350** which transfers oversight of the Aquaculture and Livestock Support Services Branch of the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to the Agribusiness Development Corporation and transfers the Agricultural Development Division of DAB to the ADC

When there is a threat of aquaculture or livestock disease, the veterinarians within this branch work closely with state veterinarians and vet medical officers in the Animal Industry Division and the USDA. This close working relationship allows the state to investigate, contain and resolve outbreaks immediately, which protects the industry. Moving this branch to another Department is concerning.

Additionally, other functions in this branch include providing grants in support of agriculture which benefit the aquaculture and livestock industries. We urge the legislature to keep this function within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity so that it continues to be a regulatory department as well as one that provides advocacy and support for agriculture.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Ranchers produce a high-quality protein and are the stewards of almost 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or nearly 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Managing Director

