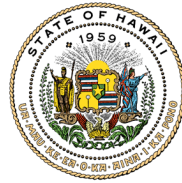


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

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 HOUSING

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026
10:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 430**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2405, SENATE DRAFT 1, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING**

Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake and Members of the Committee:

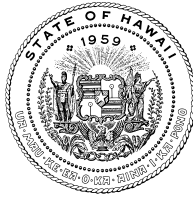
Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2405, Senate Draft 1, House Draft 1 that establishes an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State. An interim and final report are due to the 2028 and 2029 Legislatures, respectively. There is an appropriation for data collection, report preparation, and hiring consultants. The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) offers comments.

The Department recommends that an early task of the Task Force, once established, is to gather data and information and survey farm operators to assess the realistic demand for farm workers. This information would inform a targeted rather than broad assessment of agricultural workforce housing needs. For instance, in 2022, 59 percent of Hawaii's 6,569 farms (federal definition) made less than \$10,000 a year in revenue from agricultural product sales. We do not know if these lower-income farm operations are able to hire farm workers, much less afford building and operating onfarm worker housing or be able to participate in alternative worker housing. A possible solution may be congregate living facilities located in the vicinity of where these small farm operations are aggregated.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



DEAN MINAKAMI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM

HAWAII HOUSING FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

677 QUEEN STREET, SUITE 300

HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

FAX: (808) 587-0600

Statement of

DEAN MINAKAMI

Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation
Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

March 25, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

State Capitol, Room 430

In consideration of

SENATE BILL 2405, SENATE DRAFT 1, HOUSE DRAFT 1 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and members of the Committee.

HHFDC **supports** Senate Bill 2405, Senate Draft 1, House Draft 1, which establishes an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group to address the shortage of agricultural workforce housing in the State.

This measure addresses one of the most persistent barriers facing Hawaii's agricultural sector: the critical shortage of stable, affordable housing for agricultural workers. Across all islands, agricultural producers consistently report that the lack of workforce housing directly limits their ability to recruit and retain workers, scale production, and sustain long-term operations. In many rural communities, farm workers face long commutes, overcrowded living conditions, or are priced out of nearby housing entirely. These constraints weaken the State's food security goals, undermine rural economic stability, and hinder the growth of local agriculture.

This bill takes a strategic, collaborative approach by convening key state agencies, agricultural organizations, and subject-matter experts. This cross-sector structure is essential to resolving the legal, zoning, financial, and land-use challenges that have historically impeded the development of agricultural workforce housing.

We are fully committed to actively participating in the Working Group and supporting the Legislature's intent to identify practicable, scalable solutions.

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 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
March 25, 2026
10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 2405, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Chairperson Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee:

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) supports S.B. 2405, SD1, HD1, which authorizes the development of regional agricultural worker housing projects. Access to safe, affordable housing remains a critical barrier to sustaining Hawai'i's agricultural workforce and supporting local food production.

High housing costs and limited availability make it difficult for agricultural workers to live near their place of employment, contributing to labor shortages and operational challenges for farmers. A regional housing model offers an efficient and scalable solution by supporting shared housing resources across multiple agricultural operations while ensuring compliance with health and safety standards.

ADC supports a collaborative, interagency approach that brings together the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, housing agencies, and other stakeholders to coordinate planning, administration, and implementation of these projects. Strengthened interagency coordination will be critical to streamlining processes, aligning resources, and ensuring successful delivery of agricultural worker housing statewide.

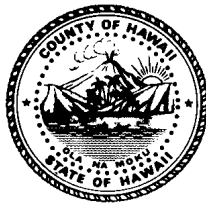
SENATE BILL NO. 2405, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING
Page 2 of 2

This measure advances broader goals of workforce stability, food security, and agricultural sustainability across the state.

For these reasons, favorable consideration of S.B. 2405, 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.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor

William V. Brilhante, Jr.
Managing Director



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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March 24, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

WEDNESDAY, March 25, 2026

10:00 AM

CONFERENCE ROOM 430

TESTIMONY ON SB 2405 SD1 HD1

Relating to Agricultural Workforce Housing

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

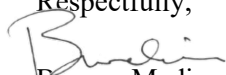
I am Benson Medina, Director of the Department of Research and Development, County of Hawai'i. One of the agricultural objectives of this department is to support collaboration, innovation, resource development, and programmatic sustainability throughout the food system to reduce food waste, improve producer viability and resilience, develop workforce development pathways, or increase access to locally produced food among low-income residents.

The County of Hawai'i provides written testimony in **SUPPORT of SB2405 SD1 HD1** to establish an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State.

Creating sufficient and timely farmworker and low-income housing on Hawai'i Island is likely to entail careful examination and streamlining of the planning, permitting, and building process. **We kindly request that a representative from each of the four counties be invited to the proposed working group to help determine the specific housing needs of each agricultural workforce within each county.**

For farmworkers, safe, affordable housing close to the workplace reduces travel time, increases safety, and contributes to overall wellbeing. Poor or overcrowded housing can lead to health and safety concerns, and housing insecurity is associated with a higher risk of chronic health conditions and lower access to primary and preventative healthcare (Martin et al. 2019; Gu et al. 2023). A 2025 statewide survey on land access found that housing was the second top concern among producers, with either difficulty or a complete inability to access housing on or directly adjacent to farmland (Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i, 2025). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of SB2405 SD1 HD1.**

Respectfully,


Benson Medina
Director

March 25, 2026

TO: Chair Evslin and Members of the House Committee on Housing
RE: SB 2405 SD1 HD1, Relating to Agricultural Workforce Housing

Dear Chair Evslin 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 2405 SD1 HD1, with amendments. This bill would establish an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State.

Hawai'i's housing shortage has direct and compounding impacts on the agricultural sector, particularly through the lack of attainable and proximate worker housing in rural communities. Farms across the state report persistent difficulty recruiting and retaining agricultural workers. This is often not because of a lack of jobs, but because workers cannot find housing within a reasonable distance or price point.

The establishment of an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group represents a positive step toward addressing this issue. By convening a diverse set of stakeholders from agriculture and government, the bill sets in motion a coordinated effort to identify specific agricultural housing needs and tools to meet those needs.

In the interest of ensuring all perspectives are represented, we respectfully recommend that the working group be amended to explicitly include **at least one representative of an organization working to address Hawai'i's housing shortage.**

Please advance SB2405 SD1 HD1.

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



March 24, 2026

To: Chair Luke Evslin, Vice Chair Tyson Miyake, and the House Committee on Housing

Subject: **SB2405 SD1 HD1**, Relating to Agricultural Workforce Housing

Aloha,

I am writing in **support of SB2405 SD1 HD1** which appropriates funds to establish an agricultural workforce housing working group. This group would work to address the shortages and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the state. We support the latest amendments to the measure including adding the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to the working group, and authorizing the Dept of Agriculture and Biosecurity to provide administrative support for the working group.

A cross-sector collaborative working group can create opportunities for agricultural workforce housing that are aligned with the best interests of communities, farmworkers, landowners, and the larger agricultural system in Hawai'i. Affordable and accessible housing for farmworkers is foundational in increasing Hawai'i's capacity for locally sourced food. Lack of adequate housing is one of the biggest burdens faced by farmers, which forces them to commute long distances or choose a different career path altogether. The formation of this working group can help ease this burden by bringing together key stakeholders to explore strategies like land use and zoning reform and financial incentives. Addressing this issue is critical for improving the career viability of farmers and their ability to provide long-term contributions to Hawai'i's agriculture economy.

I urge this committee to pass SB2405 SD1 HD1 to establish an agricultural workforce housing working group. Hawai'i's food system is at a critical point and faces challenges at many levels in reaching food security goals. A working group that aims to create living spaces that suit farm owners, communities, and farmworkers is an essential next step.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Mahalo,

Sydney Haas & the Food+ Policy Team

#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2026, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.

**Testimony to the House Committee on Housing
Representative Luke A. Evslin, Chair
Representative Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, March 25, at 10:00AM
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference**

RE: SB2405 SD1 HD1 Relating to Agricultural Workforce Housing

Aloha e Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports Senate Bill 2405 Senate Draft 1 House Draft 1 (SB2405 SD1 HD1), which establishes an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State. Requires reports to the Legislature.

SB2405 SD1 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for 21st Century Agriculture. The state's agricultural sector is critical to long term economic diversification and food systems security. This legislation addresses persistent agricultural workforce challenges that include access to safe, affordable, and proximate housing. By addressing these challenges, state can strengthen the agricultural labor value proposition by creating meaningful impact on this workforce's quality of life and cost of living.

Affordable and accessible housing for the agricultural workforce is essential to sustaining and growing Hawaii's agricultural economy. Without adequate housing, employers struggle to recruit and retain workers, thereby limiting production capacity and weakening the viability of the agriculture sector. The working group proposed in this legislation is composed of the stakeholders needed for effective collaboration around zoning, county-level considerations, and financial incentives. The construction of housing by any stakeholder is a significant investment. The Chamber believes this working group will be most effective in devising sensible incentives that can encourage this investment.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass Senate Bill 2405 Senate Draft 1 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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

March 25, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

TESTIMONY ON SB 2405, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Conference Room 430 & Videoconference
10:00 AM

Aloha Chair Evslin, Vice-Chair Miyake, 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 2405, SD1, HD1, which establishes an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to address the shortage and challenges of agricultural workforce housing in the State.

Workforce housing remains a significant challenge affecting farm viability, labor retention, and the ability of agricultural operations to expand. Farmers across Hawai'i consistently identify access to appropriate and affordable workforce housing as a limiting factor in recruiting and retaining employees. Despite prior efforts to study this issue, housing constraints continue to impact agricultural productivity statewide.

SB 2405, SD1, HD1 provides a collaborative and practical forum to bring together state agencies, counties, agricultural organizations, and housing stakeholders to better understand agricultural workforce housing needs and identify potential solutions. HFB appreciates that the working group includes agricultural representation and emphasizes coordination among agencies responsible for land use, housing, and agricultural development.

HFB believes it is important that any recommendations focus on housing that directly supports bona fide agricultural operations, respects county land-use authority, and avoids unintended impacts on surrounding agricultural activities. Solutions should be flexible, county-specific, and responsive to the diverse needs of Hawai'i's agricultural workforce.

HFB looks forward to participating in the working group and continuing to work with the Legislature and state agencies to identify practical, workable strategies that support agricultural workforce housing while strengthening Hawai'i's agricultural industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2405 SD1 HD1

RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Ke Kōmike Hale o ke Kuleana Hale Noho
(House Committee on Housing)

Ke Kapikala o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 25, 2026

10:00 AM

Lumi 430

Aloha e Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the House Committee on Housing:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB2405 SD1 HD1**, which establishes an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group to examine the need for and any barriers to the construction of agricultural workforce housing in the State.

Agriculture is foundational to Hawai‘i’s economic resilience, food security, and cultural perpetuation. For Native Hawaiians, ‘āina-based livelihoods are inseparable from identity, health, and ‘ike kūpuna. In fact, one of the pathways to Native Hawaiian economic well being that OHA has committed to advance is finding new markets for Native Hawaiian products, including farming products, that can provide families with a livable wage.¹ However, the viability of agriculture in Hawai‘i is constrained by the lack of training programs, start up costs and barriers to entry for new farmers, not least of which is the cost of farmable land. All these barriers are exacerbated by the high cost of housing which makes it difficult for new farmers to invest the time needed before a start up farm becomes profitable.

Accordingly, OHA supports the working group’s comprehensive scope, beginning with the identification and assessment of the “agricultural workforce” in each

¹ See OHA Strategic Plan available at: <https://www.oha.org/about/mana-to-maui-ola/>

county. The identity (long-time resident, temporary resident), age, and other social demographic factors will help determine the type of housing needed (e.g., rental, rent to own, affordable purchase, etc.) and guide answers to other questions. As the working group gathers data, surveys farm operators, and assesses housing demand, OHA strongly recommends that all data collected and reported be disaggregated with specific identification of Native Hawaiian agricultural operators and workforce participants where feasible and appropriate. Disaggregated data will identify disparities in access and ensure that Native Hawaiian farmers and agricultural workers are equitably benefiting from any future programs.

OHA appreciates amendments that include our agency in the working group membership. OHA has long advocated for policies that expand opportunities for Native Hawaiian farmers, ranchers, and food producers. Through grantmaking, loans, and advocacy, OHA has supported initiatives that increase access to land, water, and funds for Native Hawaiian agricultural practitioners². OHA has experience in housing policy, land use issues, and community-based development; direct relationships with Native Hawaiian farmers; and a statutory and constitutional mandate to advocate for the betterment of the conditions of Native Hawaiians. OHA's participation in the working group ensures that agricultural workforce housing strategies are responsive to the needs of Native Hawaiian agricultural workers.

For the reasons stated above, OHA respectfully urges this committee to **PASS SB2405 SD1 HD1** with attention to our suggestions.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.

² OHA maintains a longstanding Mahi'ai Business Loan farm loan program (up to \$100,000, excluding construction). To expand impact, OHA's Board of Trustees approved approximately \$1 million for FY2026-2027 to support new initiatives focused on financial relief, workforce development, and agricultural business growth. The Mahi'ai Micro Fund, providing up to \$5,000 per farmer for operational costs, and the Kūlana 'Āina Program builds a statewide pipeline for farmers and food entrepreneurs through training, mentorship, and business development.



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 430
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026 AT 10:00 A.M.**

To The Honorable Representative Luke A. Evslin, Chair
The Honorable Representative Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Housing

SUPPORT SB2405 SD1 HD1 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Affordable housing has been a top priority of the Maui Chamber of Commerce for years, given the current housing crisis. We support SB2405 SD1 HD1 because it proposes the creation of a dedicated working group within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to tackle the unique challenges faced by agricultural workers in securing safe and affordable housing.

While Maui County has been making progress with legislation geared toward allowing more agricultural worker housing, the establishment of a statewide Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group is a positive step toward identifying and overcoming regulatory, financial, and land use barriers that have long hindered the development of this critical housing segment. By bringing together stakeholders from relevant agencies and sectors, the working group can help ensure that policy recommendations are informed by on-the-ground realities and best practices. We believe that a coordinated, cross-sector approach is essential to developing actionable solutions that will expedite the delivery of housing for agricultural workers, who are vital to the state's food security and rural economies.

We respectfully recommend that the working group's scope explicitly include consideration of innovative housing models, such as modular homes, tiny homes, and container homes, and that it examine opportunities to streamline permitting and zoning processes at the state and county levels.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our support of SB2405 SD1 HD1. We ask that you move this bill forward.

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-2405-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 4:33:43 PM

Testimony for HSG on 3/25/2026 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!! MAHALO!