

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

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2026
9:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325**

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

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2405, Senate 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 on-farm 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

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FAX: (808) 587-0600

Statement of

DEAN MINAKAMI

Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation
Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

March 18, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.

State Capitol, Room 325

In consideration of

SENATE BILL 2405 SENATE DRAFT 1

RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the Committee.

HHFDC **supports** Senate Bill 2405 Senate 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.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2405 SD1

RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka ‘Oihana Mahi‘ai a me ka ‘Ōnaehana Mea‘ai

Ke Kapikala o Hawai‘i

Malaki 18, 2026

9:30AM

Lumi 325

Aloha e Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB2405 SD1**, 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 of work, beginning with the identification and assessment of the “agricultural workforce” in each 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

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

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.

Additionally, OHA respectfully requests we be invited to serve as a member of the working group. 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 practitioners. 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** with attention to our suggestions.

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

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 HOSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
March 18, 2026
9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

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

Chairperson Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) strongly supports S.B. 2405, SD1, which would authorize the development of regional agricultural worker housing projects. Providing safe, affordable, and accessible housing for agricultural workers is critical to sustaining Hawai'i's agricultural economy, ensuring food security, and supporting local farm operations.

Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers consistently cite housing as one of the greatest barriers to recruiting and retaining a stable workforce. High housing costs, limited availability, and geographic mismatch between farms and housing stock make it difficult for workers to live near their place of employment. Without reliable housing, farm operations face turnover, labor shortages, and reduced productivity, all of which threaten the long-term sustainability of local food production.

S.B. 2405, SD1, allows for a regional housing model that centralizes housing resources for multiple agricultural operations, creating economies of scale while ensuring compliance with safety, health, and labor standards. This approach mirrors the successful model used in California's Napa Valley vineyards, where shared worker housing communities provide seasonal and

year-round farmworkers with safe, reliable, and community-oriented accommodations. Napa Valley's model demonstrates that regional housing solutions can:

- Improve labor stability and reduce turnover for multiple agricultural employers.
- Enhance worker well-being through access to safe, regulated, and sanitary living conditions.
- Support local economies by enabling workers to remain close to employment hubs.
- Promote operational efficiency for employers by providing predictable housing resources for labor-intensive crops.

By enabling regional housing projects, S.B. 2405, SD1, encourages collaboration among farmers, developers, and government agencies to create scalable, efficient housing that meets the unique needs of agricultural laborers. ADC notes that these projects can also integrate workforce support services, transportation, and other amenities to enhance retention, productivity, and quality of life for farm workers.

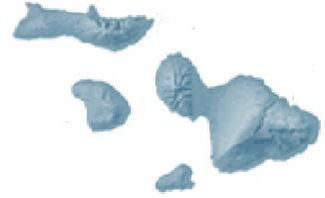
Importantly, the bill aligns with Hawai'i's broader goals of strengthening food security, supporting local workforce development, and ensuring the sustainability of agricultural enterprises statewide. ADC looks forward to **participating in the working group established under this bill** to help shape the design, implementation, and ongoing management of regional agricultural worker housing projects.

For these reasons, ADC respectfully urges the Committee to support S.B. 2405, SD1, and advance the development of regional agricultural worker housing in Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov

TO: Representative Cory M. Chun, Chair
Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair
Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor
Rogerene Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: March 6, 2026

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF SB2405 SD1, RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure.

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. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. Strengthens local food security by stabilizing the farm workforce

SB2405 supports dedicated agricultural workforce housing, which directly helps retain skilled farmworkers who are essential to increasing Hawai'i's local food production and reducing dependence on imported food.

2. Supports small and family farms facing high housing costs

By creating a clearer, more supportive framework for agricultural workforce housing, this bill helps small and mid-sized farms competing in a high-cost housing market to recruit and keep workers, allowing them to remain viable and continue stewarding agricultural lands.

3. Aligns land use with long-term agricultural and community goals

SB2405 ties housing directly to agricultural operations, helping to ensure that housing on farmlands is used to sustain working farms, protect open space, and strengthen rural

communities, rather than fueling speculative development. This bill incentivizes long-term investment in working farms by linking housing to active agricultural operations, fostering job creation in rural areas and bolstering Hawai'i's economy through diversified, self-sufficient food systems.

Mahalo for your consideration.



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March 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2405, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice-Chair Kusch, 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, 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 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.



March 17, 2026

To: Chair Cory Chun, Vice Chair Matthias Kusch and the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

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

Aloha,

I am writing in **support of SB2405 SD1** 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.

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 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.

March 18, 2026

TO: Chair Chun and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

RE: SB 2405 SD1, Relating to Agricultural Workforce Housing

Dear Chair Chun 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, 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.

Thank you,



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



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

**Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Representative Cory M. Chun, Chair
Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at 9:30AM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference**

RE: SB2405 SD1 Relating to Agricultural Workforce Housing

Aloha e Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, 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 SD1 (SB2405 SD1), 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 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. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 325
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2026 AT 9:30 A.M.**

To The Honorable Representative Cory M. Chun, Chair
The Honorable Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

SUPPORT SB2405 SD1 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 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.

In addition, the bill's requirement for regular reporting to the Legislature will enhance transparency and accountability, ensuring that progress is measured and that barriers are promptly identified and addressed. The appropriation of funds to support the working group's efforts is also a necessary investment, as it will provide the resources needed to conduct thorough research, stakeholder engagement, and policy development.

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. These approaches have shown promise in other contexts and could help reduce costs and accelerate housing delivery.

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.

Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President



LATE

Christian Zuckerman
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Chapter Presidents

Kelii Gannet
Kohala, Hawai'i

East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Ka'u, Hawai'i

Maureen Datta
Kona, Hawai'i

Gina Lind
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 Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems Committee,

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 strongly supports SB2405.**

By establishing an Agricultural Workforce Housing Working Group SB2405 seeks to create a dedicated body that can delve into the complex challenges faced by our agricultural workers when it comes to securing housing. The lack of adequate housing options not only affects the quality of life for agricultural workers but also impacts the overall productivity and sustainability of Hawaii's farming industry. By prioritizing this issue, the working group can develop targeted strategies and solutions that will directly benefit both the agricultural workforce and the wider farming community.

The establishment of a working group tasked to not only assess but also actively address these housing challenges is both timely and necessary. Thorough review of zoning policies and exploration of financial incentives is a promising strategy to encourage housing solutions. However, we suggest the bill indicate how recommendations from the working group will be prioritized and implemented post-dissolution to ensure that findings do not merely culminate in reports but translate into actionable policy changes.

SB2405 promises progress through thoughtful examination and action, ensuring that our agricultural workforce is adequately housed and supported in their essential roles within the state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union

SB-2405-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 6:38:51 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!! MAHALO!