

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

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

**TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026
10:17 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 211**

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

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki 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 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.



LATE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT SENATE BILL SB2405 SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE WORKFORCE
HOUSING

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Ki‘ina Hana a me nā Kumuwaiwai
(Senate Committee on Ways and Means)

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

Malaki 3, 2026

10:17 a.m.

Lumi 211

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB2405 SD1**, which establishes an agricultural workforce housing working group to study and address the persistent shortage of housing for agricultural workers across 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. OHA has committed to advancing pathways to Native Hawaiian economic well-being, including expanding opportunities for Native Hawaiian farmers and strengthening markets for locally produced agricultural goods that can provide families with a livable wage. However, the long-term viability of agriculture in Hawai‘i is constrained by significant barriers, including limited access to training programs, high start-up costs, restricted access to capital, the escalating price of farmable land, and the high cost of housing. Housing instability makes it especially difficult for new and emerging farmers to sustain themselves during the critical early years before a start-up operation becomes profitable.

OHA’s constitutional and statutory responsibilities include advocating for policies that improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians.¹ Stable housing is a foundational determinant of economic security, health, and the ability of families to remain rooted in

¹ Haw. Const. art. XII, §6; HRS ch. 10.

their communities. Native Hawaiians are disproportionately represented in Hawai‘i’s agricultural workforce and continue to experience higher rates of housing cost burden, overcrowding, and displacement. The lack of housing options near agricultural employment exacerbates workforce instability, threatens the long-term viability of local agriculture, and contributes to outmigration from rural communities.²

OHA appreciates that this measure takes a deliberate and data-driven approach by convening relevant state agencies and agricultural stakeholders to better assess county-specific workforce housing needs, identify public lands or facilities suitable for adaptive reuse, and evaluate regulatory barriers that limit responsible housing solutions. OHA strongly recommends that data collected and reported be disaggregated, where feasible and appropriate, to specifically identify Native Hawaiian agricultural operators and workforce participants. Disaggregated data will help identify disparities in access, ensure equitable participation in future programs, and support evidence-based policy decisions that align with the State’s trust responsibilities.

OHA further supports the working group’s charge to explore public-private partnerships and financial incentives that could encourage agricultural employers and investors to participate in workforce housing solutions. Carefully structured incentives paired with clear affordability standards, occupancy requirements, and safeguards against misuse can help ensure that public investments produce housing that serves the intended workforce and strengthens long-term community stability.

Finally, **OHA respectfully requests inclusion as a member of the working group.** OHA brings experience in housing policy, land use, and community-based development; direct relationships with Native Hawaiian farmers and agricultural practitioners; and a constitutional and statutory mandate to advocate for the betterment of Native Hawaiians. OHA’s participation will help ensure that agricultural workforce housing strategies are equitable, culturally informed, and aligned with the State’s broader housing, food security, and land stewardship goals.

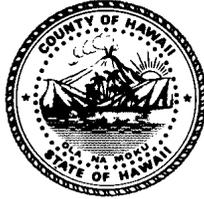
For these reasons, OHA **SUPPORTS SB2405 SD1** and looks forward to continued engagement as the working group advances practical pathways to increase access to safe, affordable, and appropriately located housing for Hawai‘i’s agricultural workforce.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

² *ALICE in Hawai‘i: 2024 Facts and Figures*, Aloha United Way (Jan. 2025).

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
(808) 961-8366 • Fax (808) 935-1205
E-mail: chresdev@co.hawaii.hi.us

March 2, 2026
HEARING BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TUESDAY, March 3, 2026
10:17 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 211

TESTIMONY ON SB 2405 SD1
Relating to Agricultural Workforce Housing

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki 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** 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.

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).

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 working group proposed in SB2405 to help determine the specific housing needs of each agricultural workforce within each county.** Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of SB2405 SD1.**

Respectfully,


Benson Medina
Director



March 1, 2026

To: Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki and the Senate Committee Ways and Means

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 space that suits 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.



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 3, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2405, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
10:17 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, 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.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair**

**Tuesday, March 3, 2026, at 10:17AM
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference**

RE: SB2405 SD1 Relating to Agricultural Workforce Housing

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, 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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 211
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026 AT 10:17 A.M.**

To The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, III, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

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

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 Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Ways and Means 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: 3/1/2026 7:43:41 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/3/2026 10:17:00 AM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!!

MAHALO!