

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 SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026, 3:02 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2718
RELATING TO FOOD HUB PILOT PROGRAM**

Chairs Gabbard & McKelvey, Vice Chairs Richards & Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

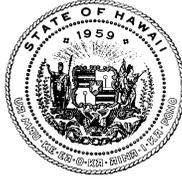
Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2718 that requires the Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Department of Defense and University of Hawaii to ensure that thirty percent of produce purchased by that department consists of fresh local agricultural products or local value-added, processed, agricultural or food products. Requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) to develop nutrition and aina-based program for integration into public school, curricular. Requires the Department to partner with a regional aggregator to support aggregation and processing of Native Hawaiian staple crops, facilitate procurement pipelines, and expand access to Native Hawaiian crops. Requires the Department to prioritize grants for an organization that meets certain requirements. Requires a report and provides an appropriation. The Department supports this bill and provides comments.

The five-year food hub pilot project will increase support of food hubs and provide Hawaii's small-scale farmers with the opportunity to aggregate their production and be able to access institutional markets. Applicants will be required to meet state and federal food safety requirements and regulations ensuring a safe food supply for students and institutions. Encouraging Native Hawaiian crops ensures that the crops being grown are well suited to Hawaii's environment and tastes of the final consumer. The purchasing requirement thresholds help to provide steady markets for local agricultural products and proteins.

Given the scope and breadth of the proposed pilot project the Department would respectfully request that adequate personnel, expertise and resources be provided to ensure success of the pilot project. Including the following:

- (1) \$ for the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1 FTE) program manager position.
- (2) \$ for the establishment of two full-time equivalent (2 FTE) grant management specialist positions.
- (3) \$ for the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1 FTE) Public Health Nutritionist IV position
- (4) \$ for establishment of one full-time equivalent (1 FTE) Office Assistant IV position.
- (5) \$ for the establishment of secured office space, equipment and program expenses.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

Testimony COMMENTING on SB2718
RELATING TO THE FOOD HUB PILOT PROGRAM.

SENATOR MIKE GABBARD, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

SENATOR ANGUS L.K. MCKELVEY, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

February 18, 2026
Room 224

1 **Fiscal Implications:** \$5,000,000 general fund appropriation for the Department of Agriculture
2 and Biosecurity; and an undetermined impact to the Department of Health.

3 **Department Testimony:**

4 The Department of Health (DOH) appreciates the intent of this measure, but expresses
5 concerns about the ability to comply as drafted. As the Kalaupapa Settlement and the Hawaii
6 State Hospital are the only two programs within DOH that regularly procure food, there is
7 insufficient volume to generate economies of scale compared to State entities with multi-
8 million dollar food budgets.

9 The Kalauapapa Settlement

10 Currently, 5 patient-residents are authorized to live at the Settlement. Three patients have
11 chosen long-term residence on the campus, and two patients live part-time in the community
12 with support from DOH, and occasionally on campus. Since the barge carrying supplies such as
13 foodstuffs sails only once per year, food grown on the island of Molokai is purchased by DOH,

1 but the quantities are extremely limited given the patient-resident population, and accurate
2 reporting is problematic.

3 It should also be noted that upon the passing of the last patient-resident, DOH will transfer
4 jurisdiction of Kalawao County and the Kalauapapa Settlement to State entities in partnership
5 with the U.S. National Park Service.

6 Hawaii State Hospital

7 The Hawaii State Hospital (HSH), licensed for 292 beds, provides inpatient psychiatric services
8 for forensically encumbered individuals within a safe and therapeutic environment. It is the
9 only State-run psychiatric facility.

10 Although HSH achieved approximately 15%, or about \$42,000, of total food purchases from
11 local producers in 2025, reaching 30% by calendar year 2028 will be challenging for an entity of
12 this size and a relatively static general fund budget for the dietary unit. Unlike the public
13 hospital system, HSH revenues are largely unsupported by third-party reimbursement that
14 supplements the base general fund budget.

15 The Legislature may consider repealing the Kalaupapa Settlement and Hawaii State Hospital
16 from this measure given the small numbers relative to the base budget, or specifying a
17 percentage range of the base budget for foodstuffs that will be allocated to locally produced
18 food. Holding DOH to the same benchmarks as larger entities such as the Department of
19 Education, which procured a total of \$82,000,000 worth of food in 2025, and the and the
20 Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, which procured \$10,500,000 worth of food in
21 2025, will be challenging given the inability to generate economies of scale that will attract
22 vendors and drive prices lower.

23 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

24

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
AND REHABILITATION**
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalua Kalaima
a Ho'oponopono Ola*
1177 Alakea Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

TOMMY JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

Melanie Martin
Deputy Director
Administration

Vacant
Deputy Director
Correctional Institutions

Sanna Muñoz
Deputy Director
Rehabilitation Services
and
Programs

No. _____

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2718
RELATING TO THE FOOD HUB PILOT PROGRAM.

by
Tommy Johnson, Director
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

AND

Senate Committee on Government Operations
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 18, 2026; 3:02 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 224 & Via Video Conference

Chairs Gabbard and McKelvey, Vice Chairs Richards and Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) respectfully **opposes** Senate Bill (SB) 2718, which, beginning January 1, 2028, requires the Departments of Education, Health, Corrections and Rehabilitation, Defense, and University of Hawai'i to ensure that thirty percent of the produce purchased by the four departments consists of fresh local agricultural products or local value-added, processed, agricultural, or food products. Requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to develop a nutrition- and aina-based program for integration into public school curricular. Requires DAB to partner with a regional aggregator to support the aggregation and processing of Native Hawaiian staple crops, facilitate procurement pipelines, and expand access to

Native Hawaiian crops. Requires DAB to prioritize grants for an organization that meets certain requirements.

DCR's food service program is an institutional food service program funded by the State's general revenues, which requires large quantities of a variety of food items, reliably delivered in large quantities when they are to be prepared and consumed at all 8 correctional facilities statewide. DCR has struggled to meet the benchmarks set under Act 144, SLH 2022, as local food products are not available in the quantities and variety required. In Fiscal Year 2025, an average of 9,683 meals were prepared daily across all 8 correctional facilities.

Furthermore, DCR is required to purchase through the lowest-bid vendors approved by the State Procurement Office, under the Department of Accounting and General Services. In Fiscal Year 2025, DCR spent \$10,311,428 in total food purchases, of which only 4.17% met the criteria for local food products.

DCR supports a gradual increase in the rate of local products purchased by the Department that also considers the economic feasibility to do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **opposition** of SB 2718.



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

Date: 02/18/2026

Time: 03:02 PM

Location: CR 224 & Videoconference

Committee: AEN/GVO

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB2718, RELATING TO THE FOOD HUB PILOT PROGRAM.

Purpose of Bill: Beginning January 1, 2028, requires the Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Department of Defense, and University of Hawaii to ensure that thirty percent of the produce purchased by that department consists of fresh local agricultural products or local value-added, processed, agricultural, or food products. Requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to develop a nutrition- and aina-based program for integration into public school curricular. Requires DAB to partner with a regional aggregator to support the aggregation and processing of Native Hawaiian staple crops, facilitate procurement pipelines, and expand access to Native Hawaiian crops. Requires DAB to prioritize grants for an organization that meets certain requirements. Requires a report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) respectfully provides comments on SB 2718.

The Department remains committed to increasing locally sourced products for the school meal program in alignment with Act 175, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021 (Act 175). The School Food Services Branch continues to expand its reach to food vendors across the state, to increase the procurement of locally grown and locally raised products, and to assist with incorporating culturally appropriate meals into school menus. It also continues to support and include students in the recipe development and menu planning process.

The development of a regional aggregator to support the aggregation and processing of Native Hawaiian staple crops, facilitate procurement pipelines, and expand access to Native Hawaiian crops will help the Department make more progress towards 30 percent of the produce that the department purchases consists of fresh local agricultural products or local value-added, processed, agricultural, or food products.

The requirement that the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, in its food-hub pilot program, "develop a nutrition- and 'āina-based education program for integration in public school curricula that utilizes locally sourced ingredients and teaches traditional food cultivation and preparation methods," has the potential to advance implementation of the [Hawai'i Farm to School Plan](#), Goal 2: "All students will participate in agriculture or nutrition education." It also aligns with the Department's [Wellness Guidelines](#), Health Education and Nutrition Program, Goal 3: "Nutrition education includes culturally relevant activities that are 'āina-based and hands-on, such as food preparation, taste-testing, farm visits and school gardens."

The Department recommends maintaining focus on the existing goal established under Act 175 (i.e., achieving 30 percent locally sourced food by 2030).



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 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2718
RELATING TO THE FOOD HUB PILOT PROGRAM

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
3:02 PM

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and McKelvey, Vice-Chair Richards, 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 supports the intent of SB 2718, which increases statewide benchmarks for the procurement of locally grown and locally processed food products and extends and expands the State's food hub pilot program.

HFB has long supported policies that increase the use of Hawai'i-grown food in our schools and other public institutions. Strengthening institutional procurement is a critical component of improving food security, stabilizing demand for farmers, and building resilient local supply chains. The food hub pilot program has helped demonstrate the value of coordinated aggregation, processing, and distribution in connecting farmers with institutional buyers.

At the same time, the accelerated procurement benchmark proposed in SB 2718 represents a significant increase over the existing statutory ramp-up schedule. Achieving thirty percent local procurement by 2028 will require continued investment in aggregation infrastructure, cold storage, processing capacity, transportation logistics, and workforce development. Production capacity must grow alongside procurement mandates to ensure that farmers can realistically meet demand.

HFB encourages a balanced implementation approach that aligns procurement targets with demonstrated supply capacity and infrastructure readiness. Clear performance metrics, transparent reporting, and coordination among the Department of Agriculture and

Biosecurity, the Department of Education, and regional aggregators will be essential to ensure that the policy strengthens local agriculture without creating unintended market distortions or pricing pressures.

With thoughtful implementation and continued collaboration with farmers, distributors, and institutional partners, SB 2718 can advance Hawai'i's long-term food security goals while supporting the growth and stability of our agricultural sector.

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

February, 2026

To: Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee,

Subject: **SB 2718**

Aloha,

I am here today in support of SB 2718. I had the privilege of drafting this measure with Senator Gabbard's sponsorship and introduction, and I appreciate the Committee's consideration. This bill is about strengthening our local food system in a way that supports farmers, expands local procurement, and builds real infrastructure for food resilience across Hawai'i.

SB 2718 expands the existing food hub pilot program into a statewide framework that supports aggregation, value-added processing, and direct connections between local producers and public institutions. It sets meaningful procurement targets for agencies like the Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Public Safety, Department of Defense, and the University of Hawai'i, ensuring that locally grown food becomes a stable part of what schools, hospitals, and other institutions serve every day.

We've heard from farmers and food hub operators that while demand for local agricultural products is strong, the infrastructure to meet that demand — aggregation facilities, processing capacity, and coordinated distribution, is still underdeveloped. Without stronger linkages, farmers continue to face barriers getting products to market, and our institutions continue to rely on imported food that could otherwise be produced here.

This bill also provides greater investment in regional food hubs and prioritizes community-based organizations that are already doing this work. By providing clarity around procurement expectations and supporting capacity building, SB 2718 helps create predictable demand and reliable market pathways for Hawai'i farmers, especially small and mid-sized producers. Food resilience is not a buzzword, it's a necessity. As we've seen with global supply disruptions, we need systems that are rooted in our islands and that invest in our people and our land. SB 2718 is a step in that direction. I respectfully ask for your support of SB 2718. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,
Carlin & 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.



Senate Committee on Agriculture & Environment

Senate Committee on Government Operations

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports: SB2718 with amendments

Wednesday, February 18th, 2026 3:02 p.m. Conference Room 224

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

HAPA supports SB2718 with amendments. Support for the initial pilot food hubs program has been instrumental in helping emerging food hubs establish business operations in Hawaii. Food hubs provide necessary aggregation of produce for small farmers to help bring produce to market. Support for food hubs promotes the production of culturally appropriate, nutritious foods while also growing our local food economy. Further, more food hubs can provide greater food system equity, providing access to healthy food in local “food deserts”.

The original intention of this bill was to support existing food hubs in scaling to meet community needs for access to local food, and it did so with a straight-forward and transparent grant program. However, our food hub partners who have on the ground experience have identified several newly added provisions in this measure that create unnecessary barriers to implementation.

Suggested amendments include:

- **Overall simplification of this bill:** while we support the intent to include more comprehensive support for increasing local food security, the expanded breadth and scope of this measure may create unnecessary barriers to achieving the primary goal of providing support for qualified food hubs. This bill should focus primarily on the mechanism of continuing funding for the implementation of the food hub pilot program.
- **Remove GroupGAP or similar certification requirements.** The Food Hub Pilot Program should not require GroupGAP or any other third-party certification as a condition of participation or funding. Existing Department of Health permitting and compliance with state and federal food safety laws are sufficient. Additional certification requirements would create inequitable barriers for smaller and neighbor island food hubs without improving food safety outcomes.
- **Provide flexibility around payment mechanisms and working capital.** Remove the requirement for mandatory third-party escrow services, particularly for food hubs that already maintain strong, transparent, and timely payment practices with producers.



Direct payment systems are more efficient and responsive than third-party intermediaries.

Instead, the Legislature may wish to allow a portion of grant funds to be used as short-term working capital to support cash-flow needs for large contracts or state-level pilots where reimbursement timelines can be delayed (e.g., SFSP or institutional procurement programs). This approach would better support farmer livelihoods while Please support SB2718 to grow markets for our local food producers.

Food hubs play a critical role in increasing our local food security and economy, please support SB2718 with the proposed amendments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is positioned below the 'Respectfully,' text.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director

SB-2718

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 4:59:16 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/18/2026 3:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kalaninui Wilson	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

I am here today in support of SB 2718. I had the privilege of drafting this measure with Senator Gabbard’s sponsorship and introduction, and I appreciate the Committee’s consideration. This bill is about strengthening our local food system in a way that supports farmers, expands local procurement, and builds real infrastructure for food resilience across Hawai‘i.

SB 2718 expands the existing food hub pilot program into a statewide framework that supports aggregation, value-added processing, and direct connections between local producers and public institutions. It sets meaningful procurement targets for agencies like the Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Public Safety, Department of Defense, and the University of Hawai‘i, ensuring that locally grown food becomes a stable part of what schools, hospitals, and other institutions serve every day.

We’ve heard from farmers and food hub operators that while demand for local agricultural products is strong, the infrastructure to meet that demand — aggregation facilities, processing capacity, and coordinated distribution, is still underdeveloped. Without stronger linkages, farmers continue to face barriers getting products to market, and our institutions continue to rely on imported food that could otherwise be produced here.

This bill also provides greater investment in regional food hubs and prioritizes community-based organizations that are already doing this work. By providing clarity around procurement expectations and supporting capacity building, SB 2718 helps create predictable demand and reliable market pathways for Hawai‘i farmers, especially small and mid-sized producers. Food resilience is not a buzzword, it’s a necessity. As we’ve seen with global supply disruptions, we need systems that are rooted in our islands and that invest in our people and our land. SB 2718 is a step in that direction. I respectfully ask for your support of SB 2718. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Kalaninui

SB-2718

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 12:55:40 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/18/2026 3:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Lenzer Medeiros	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding this important bill. Although I am no longer a farmer, I do strongly support community based agriculture. I live on a farm above Kailua Kona. I am a member of the Hawaii farmers union. My husband is a fisherman. We are both retired and live on a fixed income.

We are lucky, and that we are able to take advantage of our farmers markets, CSA boxes and fish we are able to catch ourselves. We have many friends who are fishers and hunters, and they share with us, as they do with their neighbors and friends and family.

One aspect called for in the Bill is for there to be a centralized distributor. It's not clear to me if centralized distributor means for the whole state or in each community. Living on the big island, means that moving produce and meats around the island might not be cost-effective. In fact, it may add to the cost of food for the average person. For example, it takes me 45 minutes to an hour to drive from Kailua to Waimea to attend the farmers markets. That's a 2 Hour round-trip. That of course adds to the cost of the produce and meats that I might purchase there. Although there are farmers markets closer, they tend to offer mostly products I'm not interested in such as premade jams, jellies, and coffee.

what I want is locally produced and available food products, such as meats, fish, vegetable, especially taro, ulu, lau, cabbage, potatoes, onions, And other food products that have a longer shelf life. I am able to get much of that from the local CSA boxes that I purchase through a farmers exchange. More families need to have access to it.I don't believe the program as well known.

I have many schoolteacher friends, having been a schoolteacher in the local public schools. I realize that there has been some issues about getting reliable amount of food for the Department of Education to continuously provide meals for our local school lunches and breakfast. My understanding is that some of the hangup is that they are required to purchase from a vendor on Oahu. Even though much of the produce and food stuffs is produced on our island. I'm not sure if that means local farmers have to ship the produce to Oahu, and then it is shipped back here? That seems very inefficient and expensive.

I am hopeful that there will be progress, made to establish local hubs and distribution locally in the communities where people do not have to travel far to get the items.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to make a comment or two.

With sincere appreciation,

Sara and Daniel Medeiros

Kailua Kona, Hawaii

SB-2718

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:46:23 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/18/2026 3:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT



Restore the Commons

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment and on Government Operations

SENATE BILL 2718 – RELATING TO THE FOOD HUB PILOT PROGRAM

Position: Strong Support

Me ke Aloha, Chairs Chun and Hashem, Vice Chairs Kusch and Lamosao, and Members of the Committees on Agriculture and Food Systems and on Water and Land:

HB2718 requires the Departments of Education, Health, Corrections and Rehabilitation, Defense, and the University of Hawai'i to procure thirty percent of their produce purchases as fresh local agricultural products or local value-added, processed, agricultural, or food products. It also requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity ("DAB") to develop a nutrition- and 'āina-based program for integration into the public school curricula. It requires DAB to partner with a regional aggregator to support the aggregation and processing of Native Hawaiian staple crops, facilitate procurement pipelines, and expand access to Native Hawaiian crops. And finally it requires DAB to prioritize grants for an organization that meets specific requirements.

This bill is another healthy response to the seriousness of Hawaii's food insecurity, helping to establish logical public-oriented markets for locally-produced food, in order to sustain more local food produce and value-added foodstuffs. Hawaii food hubs are a productive network for promoting local, regional food production and developing value-added products for the local market as well as for export.

Annual Hawaii Food Summits and intervening groundwork have promoted food hubs as integral to organizing markets and products for general distribution. Assuring that public institutions providing food service acquire local produce is another crucial step in supporting this network. The initial procurement requirements are a step forward in cultivating essential market demand and building capacity.

Mahalo for supporting greater food security in Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to address this issue,

/s/ Charley Ice, Hoa'āina, Waimalu, O'ahu;

retired Hydrologist, Commission on Water Resource Management (25 years) and Planner at DHHL (10 years); former OEQC Executive Secretary, House legislative staffer, and intern at DoH and DPED. former Chair of O'ahu Democratic Party Region 5 ('Aiea-Pearl City);

**Building the new normal with People and Land: Food Security Health Care Public Banking
Regenerating Soils Cutting Waste Eliminating GHG emissions**

SB-2718

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 7:43:42 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/18/2026 3:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Redford	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Promote food autonomy for Hawaii!

SB-2718

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 6:53:50 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/18/2026 3:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of SB2718.

Requiring DOE, DOH, DOC&R, the DOD and the University of Hawai‘i to use 30% fresh, local foods just makes sense. If we increase the number of producers in the state, we can increase that number, as well. We need to rely less on imported food - this will reduce the amount of taxpayer money needed to bring in food, and will support our local farmers and producers.

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

SB-2718

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:26:35 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/18/2026 3:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael EKM Olderr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because it will strengthen Hawaii's economic independence and support local workers.

SB-2718

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 3:37:17 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/18/2026 3:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanoë Wilson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF S.B. 2718

Relating to the Food Hub Pilot Program

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

My name is Dr. Kanoë Sukanuma Wilson, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of S.B. 2718.

Hawai‘i’s dependence on imported food continues to pose a serious threat to our food security, public health, and economic resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed just how fragile our supply chains are. At the same time, reductions in federal agricultural and nutrition funding have intensified the strain on local farmers and the families who rely on affordable, nutritious food. SB 2718 responds to this reality with bold, systemic solutions.

This measure strengthens and expands upon the foundation laid by Act 313 (2022) by deepening the integration of food hubs into education, health care, and institutional procurement systems. Requiring that thirty percent of produce purchased by state departments consist of fresh local or local value-added products by 2028 is both ambitious and necessary. Institutional procurement represents one of the most powerful levers available to the State to stabilize markets for local farmers while improving the quality of food served in schools, hospitals, correctional facilities, and university programs.

Importantly, this bill recognizes that food is not merely a commodity — it is medicine, culture, and connection to ‘āina. By prioritizing aggregation and processing of Native Hawaiian staple

crops such as ‘ulu, this measure strengthens local production capacity while restoring culturally significant foods into public institutions. ‘Ulu, kalo, and other traditional crops are nutritionally dense, climate resilient, and deeply embedded in our ‘ike kupuna. Expanding their access through structured procurement pipelines supports both community health outcomes and cultural continuity.

The requirement for a nutrition- and ‘āina-based education program further ensures that our keiki understand where their food comes from, how it is cultivated, and why local food systems matter. Integrating food systems education into public school curricula builds long-term behavioral change, strengthens agricultural literacy, and reconnects students to place-based stewardship practices.

SB 2718 also wisely prioritizes organizations with demonstrated experience in aggregation, processing, and distribution infrastructure. Building capacity at this level ensures that procurement targets are not merely aspirational, but achievable. The proposed \$5,000,000 appropriation represents a strategic investment in infrastructure that will generate economic multipliers across rural communities while improving statewide health outcomes.

Food security is a matter of resilience. It is also a matter of equity. Increasing local procurement reduces dependence on volatile external markets, strengthens small and mid-sized farms, and keeps food dollars circulating within Hawai‘i’s economy. Aligning procurement policy, health systems, and education creates a holistic ecosystem approach rather than isolated programs.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Committee to pass S.B. 2718.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

Dr. Kanoë Suganuma Wilson