



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL SB2781 SD1**

RELATING TO LEI

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka ‘Oihana Mahi‘ai a me ka ‘Ōnaehana Mea‘ai  
(House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems)

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

Malaki 20, 2026

9:30am

Lumi 325

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

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB2781 SD1**, which requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to convene a working group to gather data and conduct a comprehensive study of Hawai‘i’s floriculture industry, including the production and sourcing of lei materials. OHA supports this measure because lei are not merely commercial products; they are living expressions of cultural relationship that connect land, people, and ceremony across generations.

The lei is a cultural practice deeply rooted in Native Hawaiian tradition, used in ceremony, celebration and daily expressions of aloha. The growing use of imported materials in lei-making, while marketing these products with Hawaiian language and imagery, risks misleading consumers and eroding the cultural integrity of this practice. Supporting locally grown and assembled lei helps safeguard authenticity, protects cultural practitioners, and reinforces the intergenerational transmission of ‘ike associated with gathering, cultivating, and preparing lei materials.<sup>1</sup>

Hawai‘i imports a significant percentage of its agricultural products for both food and lei-making, making local production capacity, supply chains, and land allocation

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<sup>1</sup> See Mary Kawena Pukui, Samuel H. Elbert & Esther T. Mookini, *Place Names of Hawai‘i* xv–xvii (rev. ed. 1974) (describing cultural significance of plant gathering and lei traditions in Hawaiian practice); Nona Beamer, *Nā Lei Makamae: The Treasured Lei* 1–5 (1996).

matters of cultural, economic, and food system resilience.<sup>2</sup> Supporting local lei production not only protects cultural practices, but also sustains small farms, reduces dependence on imports, and reinforces rural economic stability.

Requiring data collection regarding local production capacity lays the groundwork for informed policy decisions to promote fair labeling, protect intellectual and cultural integrity. OHA supports this approach as a data-driven step toward strengthening Hawai‘i’s floriculture sector, advancing food security goals, while honoring the cultural significance of lei as a practice of relationship to ‘āina and community. OHA urges the committees to **PASS SB2781 SD1**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

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<sup>2</sup> See Univ. of Hawai‘i Econ. Research Org., *Hawai‘i’s Local Food Systems: Strengthening Resilience and Economic Stability* 3–7 (2023); Haw. Dep’t of Agric., *Hawai‘i Agriculture Facts & Figures 2022*, at 2–4.

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY**  
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**SHARON HURD**  
Chairperson  
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

**DEAN M. MATSUKAWA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

**LATE**

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

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS**

**FRIDAY MARCH 20, 2026  
9:30 AM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2781, SD1  
RELATING TO LEI**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to Senate Bill No. 2781, SD1 Relating to Lei. This bill requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to convene a working group that shall identify, gather, and report on any existing studies or assessments conducted or data assembled by the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity or University of Hawaii on flower farms, lei materials, and the capacity of local floriculture to meet public and private demand; conduct a study of the State's floriculture industry; and submit a report to the Legislature. Sunsets the working group on 6/30/2027.

The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) supports this measure and offers revisions. The Department agrees that support in the form of data collection, market research and branding of locally grown flowers for lei is essential to protect and provide the information the lei industry can rely on when making business decisions regarding increasing production to achieve a profitable business.

The Department requests consideration to revise the following sections to include:

Insert SECTION 2. (a) (1) (D) as follows:

- (D) The volume, varieties and origin of floriculture and lei materials imported for lei making for import replacement consideration.

Insert SECTION 2. (a) (2) (E) as follows:

- (E) The capacity of local suppliers to replace the varieties of floriculture and lei materials currently imported for lei making to replace imports and determine the resources that would support local industry efforts for import replacement.

Should the measure be enacted the Department requests \$50,000 for outreach and additional staffing in the Agricultural Development Division.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**LATE**

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

My name is Oriana Leao and I **support with amendments** this bill which 1) requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to convene a working group that shall identify, gather, and report on any existing studies or assessments conducted or data assembled by the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity or University of Hawai'i on flower farms, lei materials, and the capacity of local floriculture to meet public and private demand, 2) conduct a study of the State's floriculture industry, 3) submit a report to the Legislature, and 4) sunsets the working group on 6/30/2027.

The formation of a working group is a good initiative toward addressing the long-standing economic issues regarding sale, benefit, import, supply, and distribution of lei concerning Hawai'i. However, the working group lacks a representative for cultural practitioners, non-profit organizations and small business owners who have expertise, education, and experience in lei culture and economy. I recommend the following amendments to section 2(b) to read as follows:

"(b) The working group shall consist of the following [~~six~~ seven members:"

"(7) One member of the public with skills, expertise, experience, and education in lei culture and economy to include but not limited to, lei cultural practitioners, lei non-profit organizations, lei small business owners, or lei community members."

I also recommend that the bill require the Working Group to collect and report data regarding labeling as a requirement for foreign and domestic lei supply materials as well as source vendors. I recommend the following amendment to section 2(a) to read as follows:

"(1) (D) The potential environmental, social, and economic impacts of labeling requirements for foreign and domestic lei supply materials and source vendors."



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March 20, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

**TESTIMONY ON SB 2781, SD1**  
RELATING TO LEI

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 2781, SD1**, which requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to convene a working group to identify, gather, and report on existing studies or assessments conducted or data assembled by the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity or the University of Hawai'i on flower farms, lei materials, and the capacity of local floriculture to meet public and private demand; conduct a study of the State's floriculture industry; and submit a report to the Legislature.

Lei are deeply rooted in Hawai'i's cultural traditions and represent an important agricultural product for many local flower growers and lei makers. Supporting locally grown and assembled lei strengthens our floriculture industry, sustains family farms, and reinforces the cultural and economic value of Hawai'i-grown products.

HFB appreciates the Committee's transition of this measure to a working group model. A collaborative, data-driven approach will help ensure that any future policy recommendations reflect production capacity, seasonality, labor availability, and overall market realities. Bringing together growers, lei makers, retailers, and other stakeholders allows for thoughtful development of practical solutions that strengthen local agriculture while remaining workable for businesses across the supply chain.

HFB looks forward to participating in this effort and working collaboratively to support Hawai'i's floriculture industry in a sustainable and economically viable manner.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



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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 supports SB2781.**

Imported plant materials are frequently marketed with Hawaiian imagery and language, misleading consumers and siphoning revenue away from local family farmers. The working group established by this measure is a critical first step toward developing the labeling protections, procurement preferences, and biosecurity safeguards necessary to address these problems. HFU supports this effort and believes the study's findings should inform actionable standards for "Hawai'i Grown" and "Hawai'i Made" designations, local sourcing priorities for state agencies, and mitigation of invasive species risk associated with high-volume floral imports.

HFU members include small-scale flower and lei plant growers who face the barriers this study seeks to identify but may not belong to industry-specific associations like the Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association. Their perspective is essential to a complete picture of local production capacity and grower needs.

We respectfully request the following amendment to Section 2(b) to add HFU to the working group:

(7) President of Hawai'i Farmers Union, or the president's designee, who shall be invited by the chair of the working group.

HFU is committed to transforming state engagement with local floriculture from a passive expense into an active investment in Hawai'i's agricultural self-sufficiency. We look forward to contributing meaningfully to this work.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union



**Hawai'i State House of Representatives**

**Committees on Agriculture**

SB2781, SD1 – Relating to Lei

**RE: Strong support for SB2781, SD1**

March 20, 2026

Aloha Honorable Chair Chun, Honorable Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaiian Council stands in **strong support of SB2781, SD1, with amendments**. We respectfully urge the Committee to adopt the original intent of this measure, as reflected in the House companion bill, to ensure meaningful and timely support for Hawai'i's local economy, cultural practitioners, and agricultural producers.

The original draft of this bill advanced a simple but powerful concept: consumer education and procurement practices that prioritize Hawai'i-grown and Hawai'i-made lei. In contrast, the current SD1 replaces that action with the establishment of a working group—an approach that delays implementation and postpones urgently needed support for local businesses.

At a time when Hawai'i continues to recover economically, particularly in sectors tied to culture and small business, we cannot afford to delay action on a measure that directly supports local production and keeps dollars circulating within our communities.

Lei making is not only a cultural practice—it is an economic driver. Hawai'i is home to approximately 291 floriculture and nursery operations, alongside countless small lei shops, individual practitioners, and informal networks of gatherers and makers who depend on consistent local demand to remain viable. These are predominantly small, locally owned businesses, many of which operate on thin margins and are highly sensitive to fluctuations in demand.

Lei is also one of the most visible and enduring symbols of Hawai'i. From the humble lei lā'i to the intricate Ni'ihau shell lei, these expressions are rooted in our relationship to 'āina and 'ike passed down through generations. At graduations, birthdays, ceremonies, and public events, lei is woven into the fabric of everyday life in Hawai'i.

Yet today, consumers—both residents and visitors—often lack clear information about where their lei originates. Imported lei and materials are frequently indistinguishable from those grown or made in Hawai'i. This lack of transparency limits the ability of consumers to intentionally support local growers, makers, and businesses.

**HAWAIIANS ADVANCING HAWAI'I**

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The original version of SB2781 addressed this directly by:

- Establishing clear labeling practices to inform consumer choice
- Encouraging state procurement of Hawai'i-grown and Hawai'i-made lei
- Implementing a phased approach to allow local supply to scale alongside demand

These provisions represent a market-based solution that empowers consumers while strengthening local industry.

Importantly, this measure does not restrict the sale or purchase of imported lei. Rather, it ensures that consumers have the ability to make informed decisions. Concerns about supply shortages or price increases are therefore misplaced. In fact, the opposite is true: without intentional support, local supply will continue to decline, and Hawai'i will become increasingly dependent on imported products.

This is a critical point. Demand drives supply. When we fail to support local producers, we create the very shortages we fear. Conversely, by signaling consistent demand—particularly through public procurement—we create the conditions for local farmers and lei makers to expand production, invest in their operations, and sustain their livelihoods.

The working group proposed in SD1, while well-intentioned, is unlikely to produce meaningful or actionable outcomes. Its scope is narrowly focused on floriculture and does not adequately account for the full ecosystem of lei making, which includes:

- Gatherers sourcing materials from forests and coastal areas
- Cultural practitioners using traditional and non-commercial materials
- Small-scale and home-based lei makers not captured in formal industry data

As a result, the working group risks producing incomplete data that does not reflect the true breadth of Hawai'i's lei economy or cultural practices. We already have sufficient understanding to act. What is needed now is implementation—not further study.

We strongly support the approach taken in HB2194, HD2, which clarifies and strengthens the bill by recognizing both:

- “Grown in Hawai'i”
- “Made in Hawai'i”

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This distinction is critical. It acknowledges that lei making is both an agricultural and cultural practice. A lei maker who uses imported materials but creates the lei in Hawai'i is still contributing to the local economy and cultural perpetuation. By supporting both classifications, the bill provides flexibility while still prioritizing local value creation.

At its core, this measure is about economic resilience, cultural preservation, and consumer transparency.

- It keeps state dollars circulating locally
- It supports small businesses and family operations
- It reinforces Native Hawaiian cultural practices
- It empowers consumers to make values-based purchasing decisions

For these reasons, the Hawaiian Council respectfully urges the Committee to PASS SB2781 with amendments, aligning it with the intent and strength of the House companion bill.

Mahalo for your commitment to supporting Hawai'i's people, culture, and economy.

**Kūhiō Lewis**  
**CEO, Hawaiian Council**

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**SB-2781-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:39:12 PM

Testimony for AGR on 3/20/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marcella Alohalani Boido	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this bill.

Marcella Alohalai Boido, M.A.

Moili'ili, Honolulu, Hawaii 96826

**SB-2781-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 8:47:15 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/20/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I respectfully submit testimony in strong support of S.B. No. 2781, S.D. 1, relating to lei.

I wish to note for the record that I **stand on my earlier written testimony** submitted on this measure, in which I shared both personal and broader community perspectives on the rising cost of lei, the increasing reliance on imported materials, and the importance of sustaining locally grown lei flowers as a foundation of Native Hawaiian cultural practice.

I continue to strongly support this measure and appreciate the Legislature’s recognition of the need to better understand Hawai‘i’s floriculture industry through a coordinated and data-driven approach.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.