

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
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WRITTEN ONLY

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

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2026
3:02 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 016**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2798
RELATING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee and Members of the Committee:

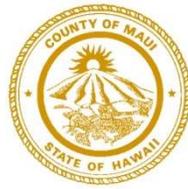
Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2798 that makes permanent the Agricultural Enforcement Pilot Program established pursuant to Act 235, SLH 2025. The program is to be renamed as the Agricultural Enforcement Program and expands the program statewide.

The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity supports this measure and otherwise defers to the Department of Law Enforcement and their pivotal role in protecting the State's agricultural legacy and the individuals and communities who dedicate themselves to this critical industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director



LATE



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
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WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
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TO: Representative Carol Funkunaga, Chair
Representative Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs, Ways and Means

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

DATE: February 3, 2026

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF SB2798, RELATING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT**

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

The Act makes permanent the Agricultural Enforcement Pilot Program established pursuant to Act 235, SLH 2025. Renames the program as the Agricultural Enforcement Program and expands the program statewide.

We **SUPPORT** SB2798 for the following reasons:

- 1. Empowers Farmers Against Theft:** Permanently codifying the Agricultural Enforcement Program relieves Maui County farmers and ranchers from the burden of agricultural theft victimization by providing consistent, proactive enforcement, safeguarding their livelihoods and reducing financial losses.
- 2. Economic Stability for Outer Islands:** Making the program permanent supports Maui County's full-time farmers/ranchers and outer island operations by freeing up department resources for education and prevention, sustaining jobs and food security without added costs.
- 3. Equity for Outer Island Farms:** Permanency extends the same robust enforcement privileges already piloted successfully on Oahu to Maui and other outer island farms, ensuring all Hawaii producers—regardless of location—benefit from equal protection against theft and biosecurity threats.

Mahalo for your consideration.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

LATE



MIKE LAMBERT
Director

ERNEST J. ROBELLO
Deputy Director
Administration

SYLVIA LUKE
LT GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai

715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2798
RELATING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT
Before the Senate Committee on
PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 3:02 PM
State Capitol Conference Room 016
Testifiers: Jared Redulla

Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) supports Senate Bill 2798, which makes permanent the Agricultural Enforcement Pilot Program established pursuant to Act 235, SLH 2025, renames it as the Agricultural Enforcement Program, and expands the program statewide.

The DLE recognizes the critical importance of protecting Hawaii's agricultural resources and addressing agricultural crimes throughout our state. Since the pilot program's establishment, the DLE has worked collaboratively with stakeholders in local agriculture, farmers, community leaders, and the Department of Agriculture to build effective partnerships to address agricultural theft and vandalism, which pose significant threats to Hawaii's food security and agricultural economy.

Making the Agricultural Enforcement Program permanent and expanding it statewide will ensure consistent enforcement across all islands. This expansion will strengthen the state's ability to investigate, prosecute, and deter agricultural crimes, including theft of

agricultural products and vandalism of agricultural properties. The statewide implementation will ensure that all farming communities receive equal protection under the law, regardless of their location.

The DLE has already dedicated resources to examining agricultural crimes reported across the state, with detectives assigned to investigate these cases. The permanent establishment of this program will provide the necessary framework and resources to continue and enhance these enforcement efforts. By coordinating with county partners and agricultural stakeholders, the program will create a more unified and effective approach to combating agricultural crime.

The permanent program also aligns with the DLE's mission of centralizing state law enforcement functions to increase public safety, improve decision-making, promote accountability, streamline communication, and provide uniform training and standards. This approach has proven successful in other areas of law enforcement, and we are confident it will yield positive results in addressing agricultural crimes as well.

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



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February 4, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2798
RELATING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

Conference Room 016 & Videoconference
3:02 PM

Aloha Chair Fukunaga, Vice-Chair Lee, 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 2798, which makes permanent the Agricultural Enforcement Pilot Program established pursuant to Act 235, SLH 2025, renames it the Agricultural Enforcement Program, and expands the program statewide.

Agricultural crime remains a serious and ongoing challenge for farmers and ranchers across all islands, not just on O'ahu and Hawai'i Island. Theft, trespass, vandalism, poaching, and illegal dumping directly threaten farm and ranch viability, public safety, and agriculture production statewide.

While Agricultural Enforcement Pilot Program is limited geographically, agricultural crime is not confined to just two islands. Farmers and ranchers on Maui, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaua'i experience similar challenges and deserve the same level of protection and support as those on O'ahu and Hawai'i Island.

We appreciate that this measure builds on an existing program rather than creating a new one. Making the program permanent and statewide recognizes that agricultural crime is not a temporary issue and requires sustained, dedicated enforcement resources. The Agricultural Enforcement Program allows law enforcement officers to focus on offenses involving agricultural products and commodities and to work collaboratively with federal, state, and county partners.

Farmers and ranchers already face numerous risks beyond their control, including weather, pests, disease, market volatility, and labor shortages. Agricultural crime adds another layer of uncertainty that undermines investment and long-term planning. A dedicated, statewide Agricultural Enforcement Program helps deter crime, improve response times, and sends a clear message that agricultural crimes will be taken seriously.

HFB appreciates the Legislature's continued attention to this issue and urges the Committee to support SB 2798 to ensure that all agricultural communities across the State benefit from consistent and effective agricultural law enforcement.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

February 2, 2026

To: Chair Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee Chris and the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

Subject: **Testimony in Support of SB2798 – Relating to Law Enforcement**

Aloha,

I respectfully submit testimony **in strong support of SB2798**, which makes permanent the Agricultural Enforcement Pilot Program established pursuant to Act 235, SLH 2025, renames it the Agricultural Enforcement Program, and expands its operation statewide.

This legislation is critical to the durability and resilience of Hawai'i's agricultural sector. The Agricultural Enforcement Pilot Program was created as a direct response to significant gaps in enforcement capacity related to crimes occurring on agricultural lands across our islands. These crimes, including theft of livestock and equipment, trespass, vandalism, and other violations undermine farm and ranch operations, inflict economic loss, and compromise both public safety and the sustainability of local food production¹. SB2798 builds on that pilot by providing a permanent and consistent structure for enforcement throughout the state.

Hawai'i Food+ Policy's mission is to support a sustainable, resilient, and equitable food system that uplifts local farmers and producers while strengthening our capacity to feed our communities. Strong protection of agricultural lands and producers directly aligns with this mission, as farmers and ranchers who face persistent crime are less able to maintain stable production and secure long-term investments in local food supply. By ensuring enforcement resources and specialized capacity are available statewide, SB2798 protects not just individual operations but the broader food security of Hawai'i's people.

In addition, law enforcement capacity that is well-organized and responsive reduces the need for individuals to take matters into their own hands, which can escalate risks to lives and community safety. A permanent Agricultural Enforcement Program also facilitates better data collection, interagency cooperation, and proactive crime prevention strategies that benefit rural and agricultural communities alike.

For these reasons, Hawai'i Food+ Policy strongly supports **SB2798** and urges its passage.

Mahalo,

¹ Green, J. (2025, June 27). *Office of the Governor – Gov. Green enacts legislation to uphold agricultural and biosecurity resilience and support local innovation*. State of Hawai'i Newsroom.

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.



**HAWAI'I
FOOD+
POLICY**

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Carlin McFadden & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

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LATE

SB-2798

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 7:56:41 AM

Testimony for PSM on 2/4/2026 3:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire	Testifying for Ohana Unity Party & Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

****Aloha Chair and Honorable Members of the Committees,****

As Chairman of the Ohana Unity Party and a resolute advocate for transparency, accountability, humane treatment, and the restoration of dignity within Hawaii's correctional system, I submit this written testimony in the strongest possible support of House Bill 2044. This essential legislation establishes an independent statewide Office of the Ombudsman for Corrections—an impartial, external watchdog dedicated to investigating complaints, monitoring conditions, and ensuring that the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation operates with fairness, humanity, and respect for the rights of incarcerated individuals. HB2044 creates an autonomous Office of the Ombudsman for Corrections, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, with full authority to: - Receive and investigate confidential complaints from incarcerated persons, families, staff, and the public regarding abuse, neglect, medical care, safety, retaliation, conditions of confinement, and administrative actions; - Conduct unannounced inspections of all correctional facilities (state-run, private, and out-of-state contracts); - Access all records, interview individuals privately, and issue public reports with findings and recommendations; - Recommend policy changes, disciplinary action, or legislative reforms; - Submit annual reports to the Legislature, Governor, and public, including trends, systemic issues, and progress on recommendations. This office is not redundant—it fills a glaring void in oversight, especially given Hawaii's history of out-of-state placements, medical neglect complaints, and limited internal accountability.

****Why I Stand Strongly in Support of HB2044****

1. **Addressing Long-Standing Systemic Failures and Lack of Independent Oversight**

Hawaii's correctional system has faced repeated criticism: overcrowding, medical neglect, retaliation against whistleblowers, inadequate mental health care, and the ongoing use of distant private prisons that isolate individuals from family and cultural support. The current Office of the Corrections Ombudsman (internal to DOCR) lacks true independence—complaints are often handled in-house, with limited transparency or enforcement power. An independent statewide Ombudsman is urgently needed to provide external, credible oversight free from departmental influence.

2. **Humanitarian and Constitutional Imperative** The Dalai Lama teaches: "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." Mahatma

Gandhi reminds us: "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." Incarcerated individuals remain human beings entitled to dignity, safety, and humane treatment under the U.S. Constitution (8th Amendment) and Hawaii State Constitution (Article I, Section 12 – cruel and unusual punishment prohibited). HB2044 upholds these principles by giving incarcerated persons—and their families—a trusted, confidential avenue to report abuse, neglect, or rights violations without fear of retaliation.

3. ****Fiscal and Public Safety Benefits**** Independent ombudsman offices in other jurisdictions (e.g., Washington, Alaska, New York) reduce litigation costs, identify systemic issues early, prevent crises, and improve facility conditions—leading to lower recidivism and safer communities upon release. In Hawaii, where corrections costs exceed \$250 million annually and out-of-state placements add millions more in transportation and contracts, an effective Ombudsman can uncover waste, recommend cost-saving reforms (e.g., expanding in-state reentry programs), and help reduce the 50% statewide recidivism rate.

4. ****Real-World Example: The Urgent Need for External Accountability**** High-profile cases and public testimonies reveal ongoing concerns: medical neglect leading to preventable deaths, retaliation against those who report misconduct, inadequate mental health care, and the isolation of Native Hawaiian inmates sent thousands of miles away. Without an independent Ombudsman, these issues fester—families are left without answers, and systemic problems persist. HB2044 changes that: It creates a dedicated, external advocate who can investigate patterns, recommend corrective action, and hold leadership accountable—ensuring corrections serves justice, not just punishment.

5. ****Support for Native Hawaiian and Marginalized Populations**** Native Hawaiians are disproportionately incarcerated (up to 39% of the population) and face unique cultural and spiritual needs that are often unmet in distant facilities. An independent Ombudsman can investigate cultural insensitivity, barriers to cultural programming, and family visitation issues—advocating for culturally appropriate care and repatriation. This bill complements other reforms (e.g., compassionate release in HB1628/SB2688, trafficking prevention in HB1913) by ensuring oversight across the entire corrections continuum.

****Conclusion and Urgent Call to Action**** HB2044 is a moral, practical, and necessary reform. It will protect human dignity, reduce costs, improve rehabilitation outcomes, and restore public trust in our correctional system. Guided by the profound wisdom of the Dalai Lama and Mahatma Gandhi, let us choose compassion, accountability, and justice—establish this independent Office of the Ombudsman for Corrections and prove that Hawaii treats every individual with the dignity they deserve.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration and service to our islands. I am available for questions or oral testimony if needed. In solidarity for justice, dignity, and ohana,

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I. Ohana Unity Party, Chairman www.Ohanaunityparty.com Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com

SB-2798

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 1:26:06 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/4/2026 3:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT this bill.

SB-2798

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:02:33 AM

Testimony for PSM on 2/4/2026 3:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!