

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

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

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2026

9:30 AM

CONFERENCE ROOM 325

**SENATE BILL NO. 2800 SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2800, Senate Draft 1. This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity ("DAB"), the Department of Land and Natural Resources ("DLNR"), and the Agribusiness Development Corporation ("ADC") to acquire, maintain, and repair irrigation systems in the State to preserve the systems for public access and the agriculture industry. The Department strongly supports this measure provided it does not impact the priorities identified in the Governor's biennium budget.

This measure appropriates general funds to the Department for acquisition, maintenance, and repair of irrigation systems in the State. We respectfully request that the amounts identified in the Water, Land, Culture and the Arts committee be inserted into the blank appropriation. This bill provides much needed support for irrigation systems to bring them up to current safety standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
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DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
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FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2800, SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

Senate Bill 2800, Senate Draft 1 proposes to appropriate funds to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department), and the Agribusiness Development Corporation to acquire, repair, and maintain irrigation systems in the State to preserve the systems for public access and the agriculture industry. **The Department strongly supports this measure.**

The Department is grateful for the inclusion of an appropriation to acquire, repair, and maintain irrigation systems in the State. The Department notes that the appropriation is limited to fiscal year 2026-2027 and respectfully requests that the appropriation be extended through fiscal year 2027-2028 to allow the Department to fully expend the funds.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HUI HO'OULU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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

SENATE BILL NO. 2800, SD1
RELATING TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

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

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) expresses its strong support for SB2800, SD1. This measure is important to ensuring the continued operation, safety, and regulatory compliance of critical agricultural infrastructure that supports thousands of acres of diversified agricultural production in Hawai'i.

ADC respectfully recommends that the Committee consider strengthening the measure to ensure that the resources provided are sufficient to address both operational needs and necessary remediation activities associated with maintaining this infrastructure. Adequate support is essential to protect approximately 17,000 acres of agricultural production, advance the State's food security objectives, and maintain public safety through responsible infrastructure management, environmental compliance, and effective water system oversight.

Much of the infrastructure involved includes water delivery systems and dam-related facilities where proper monitoring, inspection, and maintenance are essential not only for agricultural operations but also for the protection of downstream communities, roadways, and public resources. Ensuring that these

systems are properly maintained and compliant with safety requirements is therefore both an agricultural and public safety priority.

To ensure the long-term success and accountability of this effort, ADC suggests the Committee consider amendments that:

- Ensure that operational funding adequately supports the continued use and maintenance of existing contracted services necessary for system operations.
- Provide resources for appropriate security services to protect critical infrastructure and safeguard public safety.
- Support sufficient staffing capacity to oversee system operations, regulatory compliance, and infrastructure management.
- Allow for required engineering assessments, inspections, and technical reports needed to evaluate system conditions and prioritize infrastructure improvements.
- Ensure that dam safety inspections and related compliance evaluations are conducted in accordance with applicable regulatory standards.
- Support the installation and maintenance of accurate water measurement systems, including meters and monitoring equipment, to improve transparency, accountability, and water delivery accuracy.

ADC also recommends that the measure provides appropriate administrative flexibility to expedite procurement, engineering due diligence, and the engagement of qualified contractors necessary to address operational needs and safety-related remediation in a timely manner. Enabling agencies to move efficiently through procurement and technical review processes—while maintaining transparency and compliance with applicable state requirements—will help prevent delays in addressing infrastructure issues that may pose operational or public safety risks.

In addition, the measure may benefit from clarifying that remediation activities may include necessary infrastructure repairs, monitoring systems, safety upgrades, and compliance-related improvements needed to maintain safe and reliable operations over the long term.

ADC also notes that certain initial investments in monitoring equipment, engineering assessments, and priority remediation work represent one-time or front-loaded activities that can significantly reduce operational risk and improve system reliability. Ensuring that the bill provides sufficient flexibility to address these early actions will help prevent deferred maintenance challenges and reduce long-term costs.

Strengthening this measure will help protect prior public investments, support agricultural productivity, safeguard public safety, improve infrastructure oversight, and advance Hawai'i's broader goals of increasing local food production and strengthening agricultural resilience.

For these reasons, the Agribusiness Development Corporation respectfully urges the Committee to consider amendments that ensure the measure provides sufficient resources, operational flexibility, and expedited implementation tools to effectively maintain and manage this critical agricultural infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of Hawai'i's agricultural community.



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March 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2800, SD1
RELATING TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

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 2800, SD1, which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, the Department of Land and Natural Resources, and the Agribusiness Development Corporation to acquire, repair, and maintain irrigation systems throughout the State.

Reliable irrigation infrastructure is foundational to agricultural viability in Hawai'i. Farmers and ranchers depend on consistent and affordable access to water for crop production, livestock operations, and long-term farm planning. Without secure irrigation systems, agricultural production declines, costs increase, and the State's food security goals become more difficult to achieve.

Since the transition from plantation agriculture, many of Hawai'i's irrigation systems have suffered from aging infrastructure, deferred maintenance, and damage from extreme weather events. Leaks, sediment buildup, structural deterioration, and inadequate storage capacity reduce system efficiency and increase water loss. These challenges place additional financial burdens on farmers who already operate in a high-cost production environment.

Investments in irrigation infrastructure help to:

- Reduce water loss and improve system efficiency.
- Strengthen drought resilience and water reliability.
- Support new and expanding agricultural operations.
- Lower long-term operating costs for farmers and ranchers.

Reducing the cost of production is critical to reducing the cost of food. Ensuring that irrigation systems are functional, efficient, and properly maintained is one of the most direct ways the State can support agricultural productivity and economic stability in rural communities across all islands.

SB 2800, SD1 represents a critical investment in Hawai'i's agricultural infrastructure and long-term food security.

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

LARRY JEFTS FARMS, LLC
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(808) 688-2892

SB2800sd1, Relating to Irrigation Systems
House Agriculture & Food Systems (AGR) Hearing
Wednesday, March 18, 2026 – 9:30 AM

Testimony By: Larry Jeffs
Position: Strong Support

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

I am Larry Jeffs, owner and operator of Larry Jeffs Farms, LLC. We have more than 42 years of Hawaii farm experience on Molokai and Oahu. Our family farms grow about 1 million pounds weekly of import replacement produce. I am a volunteer director, serving as Chair of the West Oahu Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). I have been an officer of the Hawaii Farm Bureau for many years.

Water is the lifeblood of my farms and essential for Hawaii's agriculture. Without reliable access to affordable water, farmers and ranchers cannot grow import replacement foods for the people of Hawaii. The irrigation systems across the state were built between 1876 and 1920 by the plantations and water companies to provide a consistent water source for sugarcane. Plantations repaired and maintained the systems, benefiting surrounding farmers, communities and businesses. Plantation closures (1980-1990) meant these systems, built more than a hundred years ago, are no longer maintained, are leaking and have infrastructure issues, risking water loss and system failure.

"The need for a reliable, inexpensive source of irrigation water is critical in the transition from plantation agriculture to diversified agriculture." (The Office of Planning's Volume III: Assessment of Irrigation Systems in Hawaii, October 2012) Fourteen years later, that statement still holds.

We appreciate the Legislature's past appropriations and DAB and ADC's work on the Wahiawa irrigation network acquisition and repairs. To strengthen this effort, we respectfully request that SB2800sd1 allocate funds for acquiring, repairing and maintaining irrigation infrastructure across the state, ensuring these systems are resilient and functional. There is an urgency here for acquiring, repairing and maintaining irrigation systems.

Without the shared focus of DAB, ADC and DLNR and fiscal resources for water management, the food security that everyone wants is a 'good-to-have' concept—a concept without realistic outcomes of food production at a reasonable cost and affordable prices for our community.

Your continued support of Hawaii agriculture is appreciated. Supporting SB2800sd1 will help ensure the acquisition, repair and management of irrigation systems, strengthening our food security. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



PO Box 4, Kunia, Hawaii, 96759 || 808-622-9026 || www.agstewardshiphawaii.org

March 17, 2026

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

Re: Testimony in Support of SB2800 SD1

Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the viability and sustainability of Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers through technical assistance, resource coordination, business education, and policy support. We work closely with producers statewide on conservation agriculture and operational support, and we consistently hear that **maintaining existing irrigation and water infrastructure is a critical—but often neglected—foundation of farm viability.**

Irrigation systems are the backbone of local food production, watershed stewardship, and rural economic stability. When these systems fall into disrepair, farmers face crop losses, rising costs, and uncertainty that discourages long-term investment. Conversely, when irrigation systems are properly maintained and modernized, farmers can increase productivity, conserve water, adopt climate-smart practices, and strengthen Hawai'i's food security. **We have seen how critically important these systems are after the recent Kona Low storm.**

This measure acknowledges that proactive investment in freshwater resource management is far more cost-effective than deferred maintenance or environmental degradation. Coordinated funding to DAB, DLNR, and ADC will help preserve public irrigation assets, protect working lands, and ensure that agricultural producers have reliable access to the water infrastructure they depend on. The 1959 *Water Resources Report* emphasized this need, recommending that, "in order to encourage the expansion of diversified farming in the interest of the State's economy, the Legislature give consideration to some form of subsidization for irrigation projects where financial help is needed."

In a time of increasing climate variability, aging infrastructure, and growing pressure on freshwater resources, strategic investment in irrigation systems is an investment in resilience. It strengthens local food production, supports rural jobs, and advances responsible land and water stewardship.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Shaw".

Dr. Amanda Shaw, PhD, Statewide Food Systems Coordinator
Email: amanda@agstewardshiphawaii.org, Tel: 808 429 5310



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

The Hawaii 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 SB2800.**

SB2800 recognizes the essential role that reliable irrigation systems play in supporting Hawaii's agriculture sector. The allocation of funds to the Department of Agriculture, Biosecurity, the Department of Land and Natural Resources, and the Agribusiness Development Corporation will enable the acquisition, repair, and maintenance of vital irrigation infrastructure across the state. This investment not only strengthens our agricultural resilience but also ensures that our farmers have consistent access to the water resources necessary for sustainable crop production. By addressing the infrastructure needs, this bill ultimately supports local food security and the economic wellbeing of our rural communities.

Beyond boosting agricultural productivity, the maintenance and enhancement of irrigation systems under SB2800 will also contribute to Hawaii's broader environmental stewardship goals. A well-maintained irrigation system reduces water waste and helps conserve this precious resource. These efforts align with the state's commitment to preserving its unique ecosystems while bolstering the agricultural community that is vital to the local economy.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawaii Farmers Union