

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  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
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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  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

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

Before the Senate Committees on  
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
and  
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS  
and  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Wednesday, February 18, 2026  
3:01 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 2800  
RELATING TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

Senate Bill 2800 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.**

As written, this measure would appropriate \$14,000,000 of general funds to the Department for acquisition, maintenance, and repair of irrigation systems in the State. The Department is grateful for the inclusion of this appropriation. The Department notes that the appropriation is limited to fiscal year 2026-2027 and respectfully requests that the appropriation be extended to fiscal year 2027-2028 to allow the Department to maximize use of funds.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

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

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT AND  
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026  
3:01 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 221**

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

Chairs Gabbard, Lee, and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards, Inouye, and Wakai and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2800. 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.

As written, this measure would appropriate \$31,500,000 of general funds to the Department for acquisition, maintenance, and repair of irrigation systems in the State. The latest quote that the Department received was for a total cost of \$43,800,000 for all of the required repairs and would appreciate consideration of the full appropriation amount to complete this project. 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

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
**AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
HUI HO'OU LU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
&  
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS  
&  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM  
February 18, 2026  
3:01 p.m.  
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 2800  
RELATING TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

Chairpersons Gabbard, Lee, and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards, Inouye, and Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

The Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) expresses its strong **support** for SB2800. This adjustment is necessary to fully address the operational demands and required remediation efforts associated with maintaining critical agricultural infrastructure.

The public benefit of this investment includes keeping approximately 17,000 acres in diversified agricultural production, supporting the State's food security mandates, and maintaining public safety through proper infrastructure management, environmental compliance, and responsible water system oversight. The originally proposed \$750,000 for remediation is insufficient to meet the first-year needs of replacing meters, complying with dam safety inspections, engineering reports, and monitoring equipment for delivery and compliance.

The requested operational funding includes, but is not limited to:

- Utilizing and maintaining existing contracted services is essential to system operations.
- Security services to protect critical infrastructure and public safety.
- Staffing is necessary to oversee and manage the system effectively.
- Engineering assessments and required reports.
- Dam safety inspections and compliance-related evaluations; and
- Installation of new meters to ensure accuracy, accountability, and transparency in water use.

In addition, remediation funding is necessary to address infrastructure repairs and compliance obligations to ensure long-term system functionality and safety.

Importantly, ongoing costs after the first year are expected to be significantly lower, as the initial appropriation includes upfront capital expenses such as the purchase and installation of new meters and completion of priority remediation work. Once these one-time investments are made, annual operational expenses will be more limited to routine oversight, maintenance, and contracted services.

Without adequate funding, operational challenges and deferred remediation may escalate, resulting in greater long-term costs, potential safety risks, and disruption to agricultural production. Increasing the appropriation to \$2.5 million represents a responsible investment that protects prior public expenditures, sustains agricultural productivity, advances food self-sufficiency goals, and safeguards public infrastructure.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to amend SB2800 to reflect an appropriation of \$2.5 million and to pass the measure as amended.

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



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February 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

**TESTIMONY ON SB 2800**  
RELATING TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
3:01 PM

Aloha Chairs Gabbard, Lee, and DeCoite, Vice-Chairs Richards and Inouye, 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 SB 2800**, 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 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  
PO BOX 27  
KUNIA, HAWAII 96759  
(808) 688-2892

SB2800, Relating to Irrigation Systems  
Sen AEN/WLA/EDT Hearing – 3:01 PM  
Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Testimony By: Larry Jeffs  
Position: Strong Support

Chairs Gabbard, Lee, and DeCoite, and Vice Chairs Richards, Inouye, and Wakai, and Members of the Senate Joint Committee of AEN/WLA/EDT:

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 SB2800 allocate funds for 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 SB2800 will help ensure the repair and management of irrigation systems, strengthening our food security. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**SB-2800**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 11:07:47 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/18/2026 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2800 SB RELATING TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS.

**SB-2800**

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 5:07:32 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/18/2026 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Jaubert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michael Jaubert. I operate a small fruit tree nursery and farm in Central O‘ahu. I am in the process of installing a four acre mandarin agroforestry system with native support species between production trees. Reliable access to irrigation water from the Lake Wilson, Wahiawā Irrigation System is critical for my operation. My property receives roughly 30 inches of rain per year, with very little rainfall during the summer months. Without this irrigation supply, I would not be able to produce mandarins or propagate grafted fruit trees for retail sales. Using nearby well water would be cost prohibitive for a small farm business like mine.

I strongly support the State’s efforts to acquire and preserve this irrigation system. Central O‘ahu agriculture depends on this infrastructure. As plantation era incumbents such as sugar and pineapple have disappeared (or are in the process of phasing out most of their Hawaii operations), the State has a clear opportunity and responsibility to support a diversified agricultural economy that can provide stable local jobs and increase food resilience. Hawaii imports the vast majority of its food, and we cannot afford to let remaining productive agricultural lands lose access to irrigation and fall out of production.

This system also supports responsible water stewardship. Lake Wilson captures and stores surface water from the Ko‘olau range and makes that supply available for agricultural use, reducing pressure to pump additional groundwater from O‘ahu aquifers. Preserving, repairing, and maintaining this system is an investment in long term agricultural productivity and water security.

For these reasons, I urge you to support SB2800 and ensure the State follows through with acquiring and maintaining the Lake Wilson, Wahiawā Irrigation System so Central O‘ahu farmland can remain productive and Hawai‘i can build a more resilient, diversified agricultural economy.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



February 17, 2026

Senator Gabbard  
Senator Lee  
Senator DeCoite

RE: Urgent Support SB2800

Aloha Senators:

SB2800 is critical to the future of agriculture. I am in strong support of this important measure and urge you to schedule a hearing for this bill immediately.

Sincerely

Daniel X. Nellis  
General Manager

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

Senator Chris Lee, Chair  
Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair  
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair  
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: February 17, 2026

RE: Senate Bill 2800  
Measure Title: RELATING TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS.  
Report Title: DAB; DLNR; ADC; Irrigation Systems; Appropriation (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support Senate Bill 2800. Thank you for introducing this bill.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore