

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

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State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026

2:00 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM 308 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

**SENATE BILL NO. 2802, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testify on Senate Bill No. 2802, SD1, HD1, relating to the University of Hawaii. This measure appropriates funds to establish a Bachelor of Science degree program in Agricultural Science at University of Hawaii-West Oahu; to fund full-time positions; and for supplies and equipment to support the programs. Effective 7/1/2050. The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) supports this measure.

The Department believes that additional opportunities for higher education are critical to maintaining a consistent pipeline of well-educated applicants for the workforce and to enhance the State's agricultural industries. The establishment of a Bachelor of Science degree program in Agricultural Science at the University of Hawaii-West Oahu fills a critical gap by creating a degree program on Oahu that is directly related to agriculture while simultaneously creating an additional higher-education opportunity for students in leeward Oahu. Additionally, many of the Department's positions are specialized and require a Bachelor of Science degree, including many in the Plant Industry Division, such as biosecurity inspectors and noxious weed specialists, and the Department believes this program will greatly support the Department's ongoing biosecurity efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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April 7, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON SB 2802, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, 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 2802, SD1, HD1 which appropriates funds to establish a Bachelor's Degree program in agricultural science at Leeward Community College and to fund positions and supplies to support the programs.

Workforce availability remains one of the most significant challenges facing agriculture in Hawai'i. Farmers and ranchers consistently cite difficulty finding and retaining trained employees with the technical, scientific, and operational skills required for modern agricultural operations. Expanding access to applied agricultural education is critical to addressing this gap and supporting the long-term viability of local agriculture.

HFB appreciates the HED Committee's efforts to strengthen agricultural education and recognizes the intent of the amendments to establish the program at the University of Hawai'i West O'ahu.

However, HFB respectfully notes that the original version of this measure proposed establishing the agricultural science program at Leeward Community College, which currently serves as an important entry point for many students pursuing careers in agriculture.

Locating the program at Leeward Community College would:

- Build upon existing associate degree and certificate pathways;
- Provide more accessible, hands-on, and applied learning opportunities; and
- Support students who may be place-bound or entering agriculture through non-traditional pathways.

Community colleges play a critical role in developing Hawai'i's agricultural workforce by providing practical, industry-aligned training. Strengthening this pipeline at the community college level can help increase participation and retention in agricultural careers.

HFB respectfully requests that the Legislature consider restoring the agricultural science bachelor's degree program to Leeward Community College, as proposed in the original version of the measure.

HFB supports continued collaboration across the University of Hawai'i system to ensure that agricultural education pathways, from certificate to associate to bachelor's degrees, are aligned, accessible, and responsive to workforce needs across the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

3 April 2026

To: Chair Chris Todd and Vice-Chair Jenna Takenouchi, House Committee on Finance

Subject: **SB2802 SD1 HD1** Relating to the Establishment of Bachelor Degree in Agricultural Science at University of Hawaii, West Oahu

Aloha,

I am writing in support of SB2802 SD1 HD1 which will establish a bachelor of science degree in agricultural science at the University of Hawaii, West Oahu.. Currently, Hawai'i faces a shortage of practitioners of agricultural science while those who do farm are increasingly over the age of 65. To champion the growth of a new generation of farmers and work with transforming Hawai'i's food systems, a science-based progressive educational program is required. These agricultural, farming practitioners will be needed to push this transformation of Hawai'i's agriculture and reduce the reliance on food shipped from the Mainland. Piggybacking off the current availability of Hawai'i agricultural educational programs and granting the bachelor of science degree would facilitate the continued food systems transformation of Hawai'i's agriculture.

I urge this committee to pass SB2802 SD1 HD1 to establish a bachelor of science degree in agricultural science program at University of Hawai'i, West Oahu.. This program would facilitate growing the new population of farmers and meeting the food needs of the Hawaiian population now and in the future. This educational endeavor will further drive the transformation of food systems in Hawai'i.

Mahalo,
Carlin McFadden & 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 2025, 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.