



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
March 16, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Debora Halbert, Vice President for Academic Strategy

and

Lui Hokoana, Interim Vice President for Community Colleges
University of Hawai'i System

SB 2802 SD1 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII.

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of SB 2802 SD1 and respectfully submits the following comments regarding the expansion of baccalaureate capacity to address workforce shortages in K-12 education and agriculture.

While the University recognizes the urgent need for more educators and agricultural professionals, we recommend that the resources appropriated in SB 2802 SD1 be utilized to implement existing plans to enhance degree alignment between Leeward Community College and UH West O'ahu, rather than establishing separate, independent baccalaureate degrees at the community college level.

The University's position is guided by three primary considerations:

- A core principle of the UH System is to avoid the unnecessary duplication of programs. When a mission-aligned, four-year institution is located in close proximity—as is the case with UH West O'ahu and Leeward CC—the most fiscally responsible approach is to utilize the existing baccalaureate infrastructure of the university partner before establishing new, independent four-year portfolios at a community college.
- UH West O'ahu currently has the capacity to grow. It is essential to fully realize the potential of our existing four-year regional programs first. Once these programs reach capacity, the University can then better determine the need for additional independent degrees to be established in the region.
- There is currently a robust, systemwide effort focused on aligning teacher education and agriculture pathways to enhance transferability. A 2+2 model ensures that students benefit from the specialized, foundational environment of Leeward CC for their first two years, followed by a seamless transition into the upper-division expertise available at UH West O'ahu.

The University is already pursuing a unified vision for this region through the dual appointment of a single Chancellor to lead both campuses. This leadership structure is designed to co-create a "Regional Comprehensive Educational Ecosystem" by removing administrative barriers. Aligning the funds from SB 2802 SD1 toward this integrated model will allow for:

- Seamless Progression: Optimizing curriculum between the two campuses ensures 100% credit transfer, removing the "bottlenecks" that lead to student attrition in both education and agriculture.
- Fiscal Efficiency: Maximizing the impact of state resources and the Hawai'i's Promise scholarship by providing clear pathways without creating duplicative administrative overhead.
- Targeted Workforce Delivery: Delivering upper-division coursework in flexible formats that meet the specific needs of the region's working student and farming populations.

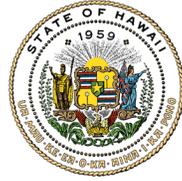
A unified regional approach is the most efficient method to solve workforce shortages while strengthening the long-term health of both institutions.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of SB 2802 SD1, provided its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Board of Regents Approved Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

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

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 309 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

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

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testify on Senate Bill No. 2802, SD1, relating to the University of Hawaii. This measure appropriates funds to establish bachelor's degree programs in education and in agricultural science at Leeward Community College; to fund two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) positions; and for supplies and equipment to support the programs. Effective 7/1/2050. The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) supports this measure and offers comments.

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. Many of the Department's positions are specialized and require a Bachelor of Science degree, which includes many related to biosecurity in the Plant Industry Division, such as biosecurity inspectors and noxious weed specialists. While the Department is in support of this measure, the Department believes the agricultural science degree should be offered as a Bachelor of Science degree opposed to a Bachelor of Arts degree due to the fact that agricultural science is often a blend of other scientific fields such as animal/plant biology, integrated pest management, soil science, and agronomy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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March 16, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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

Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice-Chair Amato, 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, 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 at the community college level helps address this gap while keeping students in Hawai'i to complete their degrees.

The proposed program supports practical, hands-on learning aligned with Hawai'i's unique agricultural systems and labor needs. By integrating agricultural education within Leeward Community College, SB 2802, SD1 creates opportunities for students who may not otherwise pursue four-year degrees, while strengthening the pipeline of future producers, managers, and agricultural professionals. This investment directly supports the development of Hawai'i's agricultural workforce and strengthens long-term career pathways for local students interested in agriculture.

Investments in agricultural education are essential to growing, not just sustaining, agriculture in Hawai'i. Programs like this help advance broader state goals related to local food production, farm-to-school initiatives, economic diversification, and natural resource stewardship.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

SB2802 SD1
RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

March 16, 2026, 2:00 PM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

Chair Takuya, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports SB2802 SD1** which appropriates moneys to establish bachelor's degree programs in education and in agricultural science at Leeward Community College and to fund 2 FTE positions and supplies to support the programs.

Establishing a career pathway to agriculture is crucial for the industry, as the population of farmers and ranchers continue to age. The industry has cited shortage of labor and entry into the industry as barriers to growth. This includes labor shortages across the entire supply chain, including production, processing, and transportation. An agricultural science degree at LCC can provide an option for local students to get into the agricultural sector and contribute to their local communities.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Ranchers produce a high-quality protein and are the stewards of almost 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or nearly 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Managing Director



SB-2802-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2026 3:26:04 PM

Testimony for HED on 3/16/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2802 SB RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII.

SB-2802-SD-1

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Testimony for HED on 3/16/2026 2:00:00 PM

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Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2802 SB RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII.