

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 COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

February 12, 2026
3:05 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 3233
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Chairpersons Gabbard and McKelvey, Vice Chairs Richards and Gabbard, and
Members of the Committees:

We are writing to express my **support** for Senate Bill 3233 and its provisions to expand agricultural worker housing, particularly through the awarding of additional points or preference to projects that directly advance food security, strengthen rural communities, and help meet state housing mandates.

Access to safe, affordable housing for agricultural workers is fundamental to maintaining a stable and reliable food supply. Farmworkers are essential to our state's agricultural economy and food system. Yet many face significant housing shortages, overcrowding, and long commutes due to limited rural housing stock. By prioritizing projects that include dedicated agricultural worker housing, SB 3233 takes a practical and strategic step toward protecting our food security and ensuring continuity in food production.

Providing additional points or preference for developments that include agricultural worker housing recognizes the unique needs of rural communities. These communities often struggle to attract housing investment despite playing a critical role in statewide economic and food systems. Targeted incentives will help direct resources where they are most needed, supporting local economies, stabilizing the workforce, and reducing displacement pressures.

Moreover, this approach aligns with state housing mandates by encouraging the development of housing types that are both workforce-focused and regionally appropriate. Agricultural worker housing contributes to meeting regional housing needs assessments while also addressing workforce shortages in a vital industry. Aligning housing policy with food system resilience is both fiscally responsible and forward-thinking.

SB 3233 represents a balanced and meaningful policy solution—one that acknowledges the connection between housing, economic stability, and food security. I respectfully urge your support for this legislation and its provisions that prioritize agricultural worker housing through additional scoring or preference.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to strengthening our communities and ensuring a resilient food system.

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



BONNIE KAHAKUI
ADMINISTRATOR

DAYNA OMIYA
ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE PROCUREMENT OFFICE

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TESTIMONY
OF
BONNIE KAHAKUI, ADMINISTRATOR
STATE PROCUREMENT OFFICE

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES
ON
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
AND
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
FEBRUARY 12, 2026, 3:05 PM

SENATE BILL 3233
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Chair/Vice Chair Gabbard, Chair McKelvey, Vice Chair Richards, and members of the committees, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill 3233. The State Procurement Office (SPO) appreciates the intent to support Hawaii's agricultural sector by addressing labor shortages driven in part by limited and high-cost housing options that make it difficult to recruit and retain workers in the industry. The SPO respectfully offers the following comments and recommendations.

COMMENTS

The bill proposes awarding additional points or preferences to agricultural projects that provide workforce housing; however, it does not define the criteria for evaluating the additional points or preferences, nor does it specify the methods of procurement. While the bill's intent aligns with policy goals, procurement evaluation criteria are governed by the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 103D, the Hawaii Public Procurement Code.

The purpose of the Hawaii Public Procurement Code is to promote fair and open competition, ensure equal opportunity, and safeguard the integrity of the contracting process. Furthermore, the Code is applied equally and uniformly to maintain transparency and accountability while preventing favoritism, collusion, or fraud in awarding contracts. These principles are essential for good governance. Pursuant to Section 103D-101, HRS, economic competition is

encouraged by “ensuring all persons are afforded an equal opportunity to compete in a fair and open environment.”

Applying additional points for preference to procurements based on workforce housing availability may reduce competition and increase costs to taxpayers. National procurement organizations, including the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) and the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP), have noted that preferences in procurement processes can increase costs and limit market participation.

As procurement professionals, preferences in procurement processes are viewed as increased cost to the state. Whether through awarding a contract to a vendor with a preference or the procurement resources required for applying, analyzing and reviewing, preferences increase overall contract costs of the contract. NIGP has also opposed all types of preference laws and practices, and views them “as impediments to the cost-effective procurement of goods, services and construction in a free enterprise system.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The SPO acknowledges the intent to support Hawaii’s agricultural workforce by incorporating agricultural workforce housing as a scored public benefit within existing state evaluation and decision-making processes. However, we recommend that the additional points or preferences apply only to procurement involving agricultural products pertaining to **HRS Sections 103D-302, Competitive Sealed Bidding, and 103D-303, Competitive Sealed Proposals**, which provide structured competitive procedures with formal evaluation and award requirements that can accommodate a limited preference while preserving transparency and competition. These additional points or preferences **should not** apply to **HRS Section 103D-305, Small Purchases**, which is designed to provide a simplified and expedited method for obtaining goods, services, and construction.

Therefore, the SPO recommends the following language for SECTION 2, Page 3, lines 1-12:

"SECTION 2. (a) Any state agency administering agricultural leases, licenses, development programs, or procurement involving agricultural products **in accordance with §103D-302 and §103D-303**, including but not limited to the department of agriculture and biosecurity and the agribusiness development corporation, shall award additional points or preferences to agricultural projects that voluntarily provide:

- (1) On-site or proximate workforce housing for agricultural workers; or

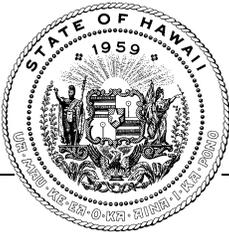
- (2) Formal partnerships that secure housing for a portion of the agricultural workforce associated with the project. "

The SPO also recommends the following revision to SECTION 2, page 4, lines 15-21.

"Agricultural project" means any agricultural, aquacultural, or agroforestry project applying for or participating in a:

- (1) State agricultural land lease or license;
- (2) State-supported agricultural development program;
or
- (3) State procurement in accordance with §103D-302 and §103D-303, grant, or institutional purchasing contract that includes agricultural production. "

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF PLANNING
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
**SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT AND
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

Thursday, February 12, 2026
3:05 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

in consideration of
SB 3233
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Chairs Gabbard and McKelvey, Vice Chairs Richards and Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Government Operations.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports** SB 3233, which promotes the agricultural workforce housing by requiring state agencies that administer agricultural leases, licenses, development programs, or procurement involving agricultural products to award additional points or preference to agricultural projects that provide workforce housing.

OPSD supports more farm employee housing on bona fide farms in the State Agricultural District. Farm employee housing helps bona fide farms retain workers and helps to alleviate the state's housing shortage. However, OPSD defers to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, the Agribusiness Development Corporation, and any other state agency that administers agricultural leases, licenses, development programs, or procurement involving agricultural products to determine whether the bill might have any unintended consequences.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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February 12, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

TESTIMONY ON SB 3233
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
3:05 PM

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and McKelvey, Vice-Chair Richards, 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 3233, which requires state agencies, including the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and Agribusiness Development Corporation, that administer agricultural leases, licenses, development programs, or procurement involving agricultural products to award points or preferences to agricultural projects incorporating agricultural workforce housing.

Access to affordable workforce housing remains one of the most significant barriers to agricultural viability in Hawai'i, particularly on neighbor islands and in rural communities. For many agricultural operations, the ability to provide housing for employees directly affects recruitment, retention, and long-term farm sustainability.

SB 3233 takes an incentive-based approach by providing scoring preferences within state agricultural programs for projects that incorporate workforce housing. HFB appreciates that the measure does not create a mandate but instead encourages voluntary integration of housing into agricultural development planning.

As the measure moves forward, HFB respectfully encourages consideration of implementation flexibility, particularly for smaller or diversified farms that may not have the scale or capital capacity to provide housing for at least twenty percent of their workforce. Careful calibration of how scoring preferences are weighted will help ensure

that the bill strengthens agricultural workforce stability without unintentionally disadvantaging smaller operations.

HFB appreciates the Legislature's recognition that agricultural workforce housing is directly tied to food production and rural economic stability, and we look forward to continued collaboration on practical solutions that support Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Government Operations
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 14, 2024, at 9:15AM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

RE: SB3233 Relating to Agricultural Support

Aloha e Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports Senate Bill 3233 (SB3233), which would incorporate voluntary agricultural workforce housing as a scored public benefit within existing state evaluation and decision-making processes for agricultural leases, licenses, development programs, and procurement.

SB3233 aligns directly with the 21st Century Agriculture policy pillar of the Chamber's 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii, which calls for sensible, market-aligned policies that strengthen the viability, competitiveness, and resilience of Hawaii's agricultural sector. The Blueprint at large focuses on innovative solutions that support industry growth. Giving preference to farms that offer workforce housing allows the legislature to incentivize the development of this infrastructure: at no cost to the state, with no mandate required, and at no cost to the farmer.

The agriculture industry continues to face labor shortages and struggles to attract a younger labor force. Incentivizing the construction of workforce housing, and rewarding existing workforce housing, strengthens the agriculture labor proposition. Agricultural workforce housing generates broad public benefits, including reducing commute times, traffic, and strain on public infrastructure; and it allows industry to better attract and retain labor. These effects improve food security, support rural economies, and a build more resilient agricultural workforce.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask to pass Senate Bill 3233. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.



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Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i

Aloha Chairs Gabbard & McKelvey, Vice Chairs Richards & Gabbard, and Committee Members,

The Hawai'i 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 offers comments on SB3233.**

SB3233 addresses the labor housing crisis but requires safeguards to prevent public land subsidy consolidation by well-capitalized entities at the expense of smallholders.

The proposed scoring preferences favor entities with existing capital to develop infrastructure, effectively forcing farmers to become housing developers and locking out small-scale producers from accessing state leases.

This legislation risks reproducing flawed agricultural park bidding models where land access is determined by financial liquidity rather than agricultural merit or food production potential.

Shifting the housing burden to private developers without unit-allocation limits allows large operations to monopolize state land subsidized workforce housing, creating a barrier for the next generation of farmers who cannot compete with corporate scale.

While the bill establishes a floor for agricultural worker units, it does not establish a ceiling per operation. To address this, consider amending SECTION 2. (b) Scoring rubrics and guidelines include:

- (1) Preference for projects that provide housing for workers from multiple independent farm operations; and
- (2) Formal partnerships that secure housing for a portion of the agricultural workforce associated with the project; and
- (3) A cap ensuring that no single agricultural operation or affiliated entity shall be allocated more than fifty per cent of the total units within a state-funded or state-incentivized agricultural workforce housing project.

Economic viability for Hawaii's food system depends on housing people and supporting a robust and diverse industry. Slanting subsidy in land and housing towards capitalized operations risks limiting smallholder access. Amending SB3233 can protect and ensure state land serves a broad base of farmers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



February 10, 2026

Subject: **SB 3233** , Relating to Agricultural workforce housing

To: Chair Senator Mike Gabbard and Vice Chair Senator Herbert M. “Tim” Richards III, and Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment (AEN); and Chair Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey and Vice Chair Senator Mike Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations (GVO).

Aloha,

As a mahi’ai and full time student who cares about the future of Hawaii’s people, I am in strong support of SB3233 that requires state agencies that manage agricultural land, programs, or procurement to prioritize agricultural projects that include workforce housing for farm workers.

As a Hawaiian with a deep devotion to working the ‘aina, it’s been hard to find stable housing with the high rental prices to allow me to be in service to growing food for the community. On top of that, most ag lands are in rural areas without much housing available and long commutes lead to greater costs such as daily gas and less time working on the land. Access to stable, affordable housing is one of the most significant barriers facing Hawai‘i’s agricultural workforce. Us farm workers are essential to our local food system, yet so many of us are struggling to live near the lands we cultivate.

By prioritizing agricultural projects that include workforce housing, this bill takes a practical and forward-thinking approach to addressing both housing and agricultural sustainability. By incentivizing integrated project planning that strengthens workforce retention this will improve long-term operational stability. Linking agricultural development with housing solutions supports the fact that a resilient food system depends not only on land and water, but also on the well being of the people who work the land.

For these reasons, this bill represents a meaningful step toward supporting agricultural workers like myself, strengthening rural communities, and advancing Hawai‘i’s food security goals. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

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 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.

SB-3233

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:12:45 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/12/2026 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!!