

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
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**FEBRUARY 13, 2026
3:10 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 3256
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 3256. This bill establishes the Hawaii Agricultural Transportation Assistance Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) and establishes the Agricultural Transportation Assistance Special Fund Establishes purchasing requirements for crops, the Strategic Food Reserves Advisory Committee, the Agricultural Market Development Grant Program, and the Strategic Food Reserves Program Special Fund. It appropriates funds and requires reports to the Legislature. The Department supports this bill and offers comments.

As an island state transportation costs are a major expense for the agricultural community, much of the crop inputs and agricultural and processing equipment must be brought into the State. Neighbor island producers face not only shipping costs into the state but also interisland transportation costs for importations and may have to pay for shipments to Oahu which is the largest market.

These operations are often located in rural areas and while they may appear small in the overall business scheme their economic impacts in hiring and business activities for their communities are important. Establishment of the program will greatly assist the agricultural industry in becoming financially viable and sustainable enabling the state to be more food self-sufficient.

The Department would recommend that agricultural products be further defined to ensure that reimbursements and grants go to primarily agricultural producers and not to processors or food manufacturers that utilize minimal amounts of locally grown commodities or animal proteins. In addition, the Department would respectfully request that a position be provided to manage the program effectively.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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February 13, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 3256
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
3:01 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, 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 3256, which establishes the Hawai'i Agricultural Transportation Assistance Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to help offset the high cost of transporting agricultural products and essential supplies.

Transportation costs remain one of the most significant barriers facing Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers. Hawai'i's geographic isolation and interisland shipping realities place local producers at a competitive disadvantage, particularly for neighbor island operations that must ship both inputs and finished products to reach markets. Each increase in shipping, wharfage, fuel, or handling costs directly impacts farm viability, and these costs often cannot be passed on to consumers.

SB 3256 builds upon the federal Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment program model by establishing a State reimbursement component and a grant program to assist eligible agricultural producers with transportation-related expenses. By including livestock, agricultural commodities, nursery products, and necessary supplies, the measure reflects the full scope of real-world agricultural operations in Hawai'i.

Creating a dedicated special fund and providing clear administrative authority will be critical to ensuring timely reimbursements, consistent implementation, and effective outreach to producers statewide. For many farmers and ranchers, transportation costs determine whether expansion is possible, whether products can reach market, and whether local agriculture can remain competitive.

Programs like this help level the playing field, support neighbor island producers, and strengthen Hawai'i's food system by reducing one of the most persistent structural barriers to agricultural growth.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



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Rachel LaDrig
Waimanalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kauai

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Environment 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 SB3256.**

The establishment of the Hawaii Agricultural Transportation Assistance Program represents significant progress in mitigating the logistical challenges faced by local farmers and livestock producers. By addressing the high transportation costs associated with agricultural products, inputs, and supplies, this program provides crucial support for small to mid-sized farming operations. This is essential for maintaining the economic viability of Hawaii's agricultural community, which often confronts unique geographical hurdles that drive up expenses. The inclusion of a reimbursement and grant program demonstrates a comprehensive approach to assist farmers in enhancing the production and distribution of agricultural commodities, thereby supporting local food security and resilience.

To ensure program effectiveness the terms "eligible agricultural commodity" and "substantial commercial quantities" need to be defined in a manner inclusive of small and family farm production.

Ambiguous language regarding "substantial commercial quantities" favors large-scale operations and could preclude high-value, low-volume crops for eligibility. Instead HRS § 155-1 offers definitions of new, part time, and qualified farmers that could replace the ambiguous "substantial commercial quantities".

"Eligible agricultural commodity" should be defined using Federal Statute 7 C.F.R. § 755.2, to encompass any horticulture, aquaculture, and floriculture, food, feed, fiber, livestock and any product thereof. This is a broader scope more applicable than HRS §147-1 definition of "Agricultural commodity" which focuses primarily on fruits and fresh vegetable and honey.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawaii Farmers Union



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Executive Officers

Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp., *Chair*
Jayson Watts, Mahi Pono, *Vice Chair*
Jill Tamura, Tamura Super Market, *Secretary/Treas.*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *President and Executive Director*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, Odom, *Advisor*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Advisor*
Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Agriculture and Environment
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 13, 2026

TIME: 3:10pm

RE: SB3256 Relating to Agriculture

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure to establish the Hawai'i Agricultural Transportation Assistance Program. Increasing local agricultural production is essential to the long-term sustainability and food security of the State. However, local agricultural producers face significant economic challenges, particularly with the high costs of transporting agricultural products and necessary supplies across the State.

Our local agricultural sector and food manufacturing sector has tremendous potential for growth. When the state takes steps to support these businesses it helps make local foods more affordable and accessible for local residents which can increase food security.

Supporting local agriculture and food production also creates an economy that is more locally focused, more diverse, more resilient, and stronger for us all. We would support expanding this program, now or in the future to include transportation cost reimbursements for all food producers and other local manufacturers.

We encourage the Committee to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

SB3256
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Friday, February 13, 2026, 3:10 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports SB3256** which Establishes the Hawaii Agricultural Transportation Assistance Program, to consist of a reimbursement program and a grant program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, to assist certain farmers and livestock producers with transportation costs for agricultural products, inputs, supplies, and production and distribution of agricultural commodities and establishes the Hawaii Agricultural Transportation Assistance Special Fund.

The nature of our island counties means transportation costs can often be a necessary, but prohibitive, expense. In order to grow agriculture and increase local food production, the state must recognize the high transportation costs required to provide for all our communities. In the case of beef, the majority of cattle are produced on neighbor islands, while the dense population of consumers are on Oahu. In addition, transportation is required when selling animals for increasing herds and improving herd genetics. We support a cost reimbursement and grant program for transportation to assist in the transportation expenses of ranching and farming operations.

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





**THE SENATE
KA 'AHA KENEKOA
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026**

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 13, 2026
3:10 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street**

RE: SB3256 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

My name is Eric S. Tanouye and I am the President for the Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association. HFNA is a statewide umbrella organization with approximately 350 members. Our membership is made up with breeders, hybridizers, propagators, growers, shippers, wholesalers, retailers, educators, and the allied industry, which supports our efforts in agriculture.

The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS Senate Bill 3256** which establishes the Hawai'i Agricultural Transportation Assistance Program, to consist of a reimbursement program and a grant program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, to assist certain farmers and livestock producers with transportation costs for agricultural products, inputs, supplies, and production and distribution of agricultural commodities. Establishes the Hawai'i Agricultural Transportation Assistance Special Fund.

This bill will help our geographically disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and support all of agriculture in Hawaii. This will help farmers grow and deliver products, while reducing the transportation cost of inputs and bringing the products to market. It will give Hawaii growers a much needed boost to compete with products coming from outside the state.

We ask that you support our industry and agriculture, so that we may continue to bring the beauty of Hawaii to others through flowers and ornamentals.



If you have any questions at this time, I would be happy to discuss them and can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 ext 2627, cell 960-1433 and email eric@greenpointnursery.com.

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,

Eric S. Tanouye
President

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association

SB-3256

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 11:22:18 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/13/2026 3:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Takemoto	Testifying for Bayer	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of SB 3256 which establishes the Hawaii Agricultural Transportation Assistance Program to provide reimbursement and grant support to offset transportation costs for agricultural products, livestock, and essential inputs.

The establishment of this program will address an on-going and systemic issue that will help Hawaii's farmers and ranchers remain viable.

Thank you.

February 12th, 2026

To: Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Subject: **SB3256**, Relating to Agriculture

Aloha,

We are writing to you in **strong support** of **SB3256**. This bill addresses one of the greatest hindrances farmers face logistically, transportation. Supporting our farmers supports everyone, this bill fulfills that ambition.

The legislature's findings concluded that the United States Department of Agriculture's Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment (RTCP) Program, which subsidizes the high cost of transportation for agricultural products and livestock, was effective in assisting local farmers, forming the basis of why this bill is so vital. This bill addresses gaps in access to vital transportation assistance by adapting a state-level program similar to the RTCP. Subsidizing operational costs for our farmworkers is a major contributing factor to attracting new farmers and retaining them. Allowing our farmers to focus on perfecting and adapting agricultural systems without having to worry about external logistical costs benefits us all.

Establishing both reimbursement and grant programs is especially impactful in generating economic mobility for our farmers. Reimbursement programs assists farmers already producing products manage operational costs. Grant programs will help start up farmers get key access to financial assistance, incentivising them to pursue farming as a flourishing career.

Moving products has always been an issue at the forefront of the success of an agricultural product. Ensuring proper handling, moving, and storing of agricultural products can allow local products to tap into competitive longevity. Within this bill is a contribution to the foundation of a self reliance system, an internal movement system. Effectively moving towards the fulfillment of the farm to home goal.

Addressing costs in relation to transportation will also allow local farmers to better compete in local markets. Transportation costs being covered by the state will relieve some consumer pass over costs in the market. This allows more consumer choice within our markets giving our farmers an extra edge.

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.



**HAWAI'I
FOOD+
POLICY**

Honolulu, HI 96813
food@purplemaia.org

We humbly ask for your support on **SB3256**. As a bill that addresses a major hurdle for most startup and career farmers within our state, political support is vital. We thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Mahalo,
Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

SB-3256

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 5:01:02 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/13/2026 3:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cathy Goeggel	Testifying for Animal Rights Hawai'i	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We oppose any state funds for livestock industry transport until and unless they agree to meeting or exceeding federal regulations for water transport of animals. Mahalo.

SB-3256

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 7:48:30 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/13/2026 3:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lani Petrie	Testifying for Kapapala Ranch	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support