

**DAVID Y. IGE**  
Governor

**JOSH GREEN**  
Lt. Governor



**PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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## TESTIMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

FEBRUARY 13, 2020  
11:00 A.M.  
CONFERENCE ROOM 211

SENATE BILL NO. 2703  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairperson Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 2703. This bill establishes a grant program to assist beginning ranchers and farmers. The Department of Agriculture strongly supports this bill.

Hawaii's farmers now average over 60 years of age and many will soon be retiring or scaling down their operations. If Hawaii is to be more food self-sufficient, there is a need to get new farmers into the pipeline to assure greater production of locally grown crops and livestock. The proposed grant program will encourage and support beginning farmers and ranchers during the challenging start-up phase as they gain experience with markets, crop growing requirements, pests, diseases, regulatory requirements, business management and labor issues, etc. Data gathered from grant recipients will be used to assist other new farmers and ranchers by providing information such as common problems and issues as well as recommendations on best practices and "what I wished I had known before starting the business".

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





**MAUI**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS  
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 211  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2020 AT 11:00 A.M.**

To The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair;  
The Honorable Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair; and  
Members of the Committee on Ways & Means,

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2703 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Aloha, my name is Pamela Tumpap and I am the President of the Maui Chamber of Commerce, with approximately 650 members. I am writing share our support of SB2703.

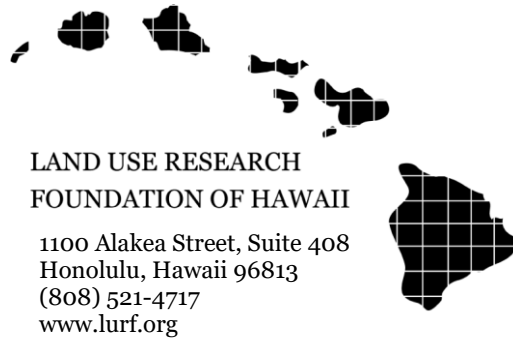
The Maui Chamber of Commerce supports the bill to create a grant program and appropriate funding for a program to assist beginning farmers and ranchers to start farm or ranch operations. Agriculture is a very important industry to our community and our sustainability, but it is a very difficult industry to successfully start and sustain. There are many unpredictable factors and expenses to starting a farm or ranch, even for experienced agriculturalists and this bill will help to offset many of those expenses and spur new farm enterprises.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this matter and ask that this bill be passed.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap  
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.



February 10, 2020

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

**Comments in Support of SB 2703 Relating to Agriculture (Creates a grant program and appropriates funding for a program to assist beginning farmers and ranchers to start farm or ranch operations.)**

**Thursday, February 13, 2020, at 11:00 a.m., in Conference Room 211**

The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawaii (LURF) is a private, non-profit research and trade association whose members include major Hawaii landowners, developers and utility companies. LURF's mission is to advocate for reasonable, rational and equitable land use planning, legislation and regulations that encourage well-planned economic growth and development, while safeguarding Hawaii's significant natural and cultural resources, and public health and safety.

LURF appreciates the opportunity to express its **support of SB 2703** and of the various agricultural stakeholder groups who defend the goals of viable agricultural operations and the conservation and protection of agriculture, including important agricultural lands (IAL) in Hawaii. The bill conveys the need to support the efforts of beginning farmers and ranchers attempting to start operations which will improve the economic viability of the State's agricultural industry.

**SB 2703.** The purpose of this bill is to establish in the Department of Agriculture a grant program, and to appropriate funding for the program to assist beginning farmers and ranchers in meeting the operating costs to start their farm or ranch operations.

**LURF's Position.** LURF believes that the proposed grant and appropriation of funds for the grant program are consistent with the underlying intent and objectives of the IAL laws (Hawaii Revised Statutes [HRS], Sections 205-41 to 52), which were enacted to fulfill the mandate in Article XI, Section 3 of the Hawaii State Constitution, "to conserve and protect agricultural lands, promote diversified agriculture, increase agricultural self-sufficiency and assure the availability of agriculturally suitable lands." As noted in HRS Section 205-41, the intent of Act 183 (2005) was to develop agricultural incentive programs to promote agricultural viability, sustained growth of the agricultural industry, and the long-term use and protection of important agricultural lands for agricultural use.

Passage of the long-awaited IAL legislation would be pointless without implementation of these programs, incentives and inducements which require the cooperation and support of agricultural, business, and educational organizations, as well as government agencies, which this bill is intended to cultivate and promote.

LURF members include property owners, farmers and ranchers who own, maintain, and engage in agricultural enterprises, and who consider incentives such as this grant program significant to the establishment and continued conduct of their operations and to help sustain and preserve their businesses into the future. The average age of Hawaii farmers is now 60 years old. Regrettably, interest in agriculture continues to decline due to misguided assumptions of the trade as entailing hard work for low pay, and requiring little, if any appreciable skills.

LURF believes efforts like the grant program and the appropriation of funds therefor would greatly assist in the perpetuation of the State's agricultural industry by assisting with efforts to help farmers and ranchers start businesses and comply with onerous regulatory requirements; by providing invaluable knowledge, skills, resources and tools; and by inspiring interest in agriculture, which will promote agricultural viability and improve Hawaii's long-term resilience and sustainability.

As the establishment of the proposed grant program significantly helps to promote economically viable agriculture and food self-sufficiency in Hawaii, LURF is in **support of SB 2703**.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of this measure.