

DAVID Y. IGE  
Governor

JOSH GREEN  
Lt. Governor



PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
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**TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**MARCH 31, 2021  
1:00 P.M.  
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 511 SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND  
CONFIRMATION TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE,  
EN YOUNG, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2025**

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of GM511, En Young's re-appointment to the Board of Agriculture. Mr. Young has served as a member of the Board of Agriculture since May of 2020. His prior experience includes a broad array of professional experience that spans the governmental, private and nonprofit sectors. He has previously worked for the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services where he oversaw a variety of state and federally-funded programs designed to alleviate poverty, including supervision of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Emergency Food Program and the Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program. He then served as the Executive Director of the Food Basket where he led the successful implementation of a SNAP-based CSA program that was focused on food sustainability and a new food insecurity nutrition incentive program. He has served as the General Manager at Sensei Holding, Inc. where he managed its marketing program and developed the logistic strategy for an innovative hydroponic farm. He currently is the principal of Ke`ei Consulting, LLC dedicated to the improvement of the food system in the private and non-profit sectors. Mr. Young's experience and kokua makes him a



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valuable member to the Hawaii Board of Agriculture. The Department strongly supports his continued service as a Board Member.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**GM-511**

Submitted on: 3/28/2021 3:16:55 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/31/2021 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Alan Gottlieb	Testifying for Ponoholo Ranch Limited	Support	No

Comments:

Please support the Confirmation of En Young



**Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.**

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**  
**Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair**  
**Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair**

Wednesday, March 31, 2021  
1:00 PM Via Videoconference

**GM 511**

Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Agriculture, Gubernatorial Nominee, EN YOUNG, for a term to expire 06-30-2025.

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

We support GM511 to appoint En Young to the Board of Agriculture. En Young's varied experience in food systems will continue to be an asset to the Board of Agriculture, especially as we find novel ways to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We respectfully request your strong support of En Young's reappointment to the Board of Agriculture.

Nicole Galase  
Managing Director





Email: [communications@ulupono.com](mailto:communications@ulupono.com)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT  
Wednesday, March 31, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

**Ulupono Initiative supports GM 511, Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Agriculture, Gubernatorial Nominee, EN YOUNG, for a term to expire 06-30-2025.**

Dear Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Director of Government Affairs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food; renewable energy and clean transportation; and better management of freshwater and waste.

**Ulupono supports GM 511.** En Young currently serves as a member-at-large for the Hawai'i Board of Agriculture. He brings a strong agricultural voice to the Board with his diverse background in local ag, which includes community feeding efforts on Hawai'i Island via the Hawai'i Food Basket, business development for ag operations at Sensei Holdings, Inc., and an ag and non-profit consulting firm supporting local producers across the State. His strong ties to local farmers and ranchers, along with the local community, will undoubtedly strongly serve the Board of Agriculture in its many important decisions.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata  
Director of Government Affairs

*Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i*



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March 31, 2021

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**TESTIMONY ON GM 511**

Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Agriculture, Gubernatorial Nominee, EN YOUNG, for a term to expire 06-30-2025

Via Videoconference  
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara, 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 Hawaii'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 the confirmation of En Young to the Board of Agriculture.**

HFB believes that Mr. Young's diverse experience in Hawai'i's food systems, organization and distribution of food to the needy, government operations, and private business will be of great value to the community in his role as a member of the Hawai'i Board of Agriculture.

Mr. Young has been an active participant in the Board meetings, working cooperatively with other members, asking important questions that have led to robust discussions, resulting in a better understanding of the matters at issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to support the confirmation of En Young to the Board of Agriculture.

**GM-511**

Submitted on: 3/30/2021 12:27:42 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/31/2021 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
J Ashman	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am in strong support of the confirmation of En Young to the Board of Agriculture.

Thank you.

Response for AEN- En Young

*(1) Why do you wish to be a member of the Board of Agriculture?*

Aloha e Chair Gabbard and members of the committee. Thank you for considering my renomination to the Hawai'i State Board of Agriculture. In the past year, I've learned much about our state's current policies, as well as the ways in which agriculture is promoted and stymied.

In short, I wish to continue my service as a Director on the Board of Agriculture to promote the development of a sector that nourishes our residents and diversifies our economy. Much can be done as a private citizen, an entrepreneur, or a policy maker to promote agriculture, however we need visibility and experience from all sectors to ensure our policy making decisions are coordinated and well informed.

I've been fortunate enough to have played roles in the government, nonprofit, and private sectors in some way over my lifetime, and I believe the Department and my fellow Directors appreciate this experience as an asset.

*(2) How do you perceive the role and responsibilities of a member of the Board of Agriculture?*

Like many other Boards and Commissions, the Board functions as a sample of the greater population. Our role, first and foremost, is to consider our end users, the citizens of our State, and bridge the gap between what is occurring in our State, and the vision our friends and neighbors have for what they believe Agriculture can do to improve their quality of life.

There are many intersections between the average residents' quality of life and Agriculture in particular. They may include economic intersections such as direct employment or diversification of opportunity for employment for themselves or their children. At a macroeconomic level, connections may include the overall resilience of the economy during a downturn, as we are experiencing now. From the standpoint of nutrition, it is now well known that produce shipped over the period of a week or two is less nutritious than fresh, as key nutrition deteriorates from time of harvest for most plants.

These are small examples, and there are many others of how Agriculture affects our daily lives. Our responsibility as policy makers is to close the gap between will and reality by creating the conditions where the behaviors and outcomes we desire will thrive. It is a delicate balance.

*(3) Given your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the Board of Agriculture, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, or knowledge that would aid in your decision-making ability as a member of the Board of Agriculture.*



Our Board functions as a unit, and you, as the confirming body have a major role in discerning what blend of skill sets are necessary to create a complete Board with the expertise to accomplish the State's policy goals.

While the president of a large agricultural firm has valuable experience, a Board with only this type of experience would not be able to serve the people well. I feel I am qualified because my experience differs from that of my fellow Directors.

I grew up in Agriculture on what was, at the time, the largest macadamia orchard in the world in South Kona. MacFarms was vertically integrated with its own processing plant and over 250,000 trees. While I didn't realize it, this was large scale agriculture, and employees and resources were deployed in units to manage and harvest the orchard according to manufacturing-style industrial plans. Later, our family had a diversified 5-acre farm with a mix of long- and short-term crops we worked ourselves.

When I began my tenure in the Lingle Administration, part of my responsibilities was to administer The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which is basically a market logistics program subsidized by the Federal Government. We would arrange transport of perishables and shelf-stable commodities from across the nation and distribute our share to Food Banks statewide.

At The Food Basket, we leveraged my knowledge of Federal subsidies and allowable uses to create programs that took advantage of Federal programs like the Senior Farmer's Nutrition Program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to connect the demand created by hunger with the supply excesses of local farms. This allowed our State to create a model for incentivizing the consumption of fresh produce at all socioeconomic levels. This program, which we named "Da Bux," is a double up food bucks program with a national network of similar providers, and is now Statewide.

I was also fortunate to work in an exciting new field of tech-infused controlled environment agriculture. With the generous support of Mr. Larry Ellison, we built a brand new facility from the ground up, training local workers in agricultural skills the State had never seen, and consistently producing farm products of the highest quality. More importantly, this field has changed the way we look at land use issues and the challenging dynamic of competing priorities for land use.

While I do not have decades of experience in any one aspect of the business of agriculture, I believe my well-rounded approach allows me to translate between sectors and, I hope, anticipate problematic policy from a number of different viewpoints.

*(4) What do you hope to accomplish during your term of service?*

We will, as a State, improve our local production of food, the groundwork has been laid. Less recognized than the issue of local food is the demise of Research and Development in Hawai'i

that allowed our monocrop plantation agriculture, and later the seed corn industry, to thrive. The seed corn industry, for all it was and wasn't, saw Hawai'i for what it is, the perfect place to develop and test the plant varieties that will lead the ballooning world population into a future with good nutrition for all.

We must recognize our isolation and close relationships as a strength, and better coordinate our efforts to ensure all voices are heard, and all mouths are equitably fed. This is my hope for the Board of Agriculture.

*(5) Name three qualities that best describe you and that would make you stand out. How would these qualities benefit the Board of Agriculture?*

I try my best to listen, to consider all sides, and to be fair. I'm not sure these make me stand out, but they are the qualities I believe are needed in public service. Fair does not mean popular, true listening is time consuming and often cryptic, and considering all sides requires the effort to go and seek those whose voices are not included.

Does the Board need this? I believe this is needed from all Directors and Commissioners of all Boards and Commissions, and I believe we have that. Each of us on the Board has very different networks and experiences, and no one is afraid of sharing their opinion. The discussions are robust and the topics challenging, I'd like to believe my participation enhances this experience and helps the public who does attend understand our decision making process.

*(6) Name one previous experience that would make you stand out. How would this benefit the Board of Agriculture?*

Each of our Directors is unique with one of a kind experiences, and it is a true privilege to get to know in a small way my fellow Directors. If I had to choose one previous experience not mentioned above, it would be working with the Hawai'i Taro Growers Association. In the late 90's my father tried to get Taro growers to utilize a shared labor model. We'd wake up at 4am to be in Ka'u by 5, or 3 am to be in Hamakua by 5 and help our association members weed, plant, harvest, whatever they needed. The coop fractured for several reasons, one being as we became more well known, members would sell to the highest bidder rather than the stable price of the coop.

Lesson learned, summarized by Richard Ha, "the farmers gotta farm." Also in this lesson, you can't blame anyone for acting in their own self-interest and, finally, if we don't work together this thing we are trying to create is not going to work.

These are some of the perspectives I bring to the Board of Agriculture.

*(7) Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interests that could arise during your service on the Board of Agriculture? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interest?*

In my current role, I do not foresee any conflicts of interest. My former employer, Sensei Farms, is largely self-contained on land that is not owned by the State, and my father, who was in Agriculture as well, is retired.

The simple answer for conflicts of interest is to be fully transparent. I have nothing to hide and, rather, I'd like the public to know my experiences as I believe it will enhance their understanding of how I came to my vote. I strive in my personal and professional life to avoid direct and indirect conflicts of interest as well as the appearance of a conflict of interest, and should there be any semblance of impropriety, I will recuse myself prior to discussion.

Mahalo e Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Nishihara, and members for your consideration.

-En Young