

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

FRIDAY, MARCH 17, 2023
9:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE BILL NO. 1588 SD2
RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chairperson Gates and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 1588 SD2. this bill appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture (DOA) to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program. The DOA supports this bill and offers comments.

The DOA has a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that allows the DOA, pursuant to licensing by USDA, to conduct food safety audits for Hawaii farmers statewide, on a fee-for-service basis. Adding and consolidating Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) or GroupGAP training for farmers to the DOA's regulatory compliance responsibilities may create a potential conflict of interest if the training is also conducted by the same Departmental staff involved in administering the USDA GroupGAP certification program. Combining both the auditing and training programs in the Department could compromise the independence and objectivity of the food safety certification program's audits. It is highly advisable that the educational functions of the program be segregated from the enforcement and auditing functions to mitigate the risks presented by arrangement. As such, the DOA supports



this bill which provides appropriation placed under the budget of the DOA's Chairperson (AGR 192 General Administration for Agriculture) to establish and implement a GroupGAP training and certification program. This would separate funding for education from the funding for enforcement by the Quality Assurance Division.

The DOA notes that UH-CTAHR Cooperative Extension Service has a farm food safety program to educate and train Hawaii farmers to comply with federal food safety regulations. Their Extension Agents work with farmers statewide and they have the technical expertise in FSMA Produce Safety Rule and USDA GAP food safety regulations to educate and train farmers. UH-CTAHR does not currently handle GroupGAP training for farmers but may consider expanding or working with organizations that currently offer GroupGAP training, should there be funds to support this type of training statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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 Agriculture and Food Systems
Friday, March 17, 2023 at 9:30 a.m.

By

Anna Wieczorek, Interim Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 1588 SD2 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 1588 SD2 relating to food safety. This bill is of great interest to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), as we are actively involved in the food safety education of Hawai'i's agricultural producers.

Since its passage in 2011, the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) is transforming the nation's food safety system by shifting the focus from responding to foodborne illness to preventing it. The GroupGAP program was created in 2015 to assist small farms with attaining their Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. As a result of this congressional action CTAHR Cooperative Extension has been deeply engaged in educational efforts to actively provide agricultural producers the information and tools necessary to comply with current FSMA requirements.

The GroupGAP certification is the only comprehensive farm food safety training program in Hawai'i that results in U. S. Department of Agriculture Harmonized GAP certification that is the standard most closely aligned with the Food and Drug Administration's food safety guidelines.

CTAHR's work in this area is confined to education and we have Extension agents in each county of the state who assist agriculture producers in their preparation to pass the GroupGAP certification process. Land Grant universities do not certify agriculture producers for federally mandated programs such as GroupGAP. Likewise, pesticide applicator licenses are issued by the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA), not CTAHR Cooperative Extension. CTAHR Cooperative Extension can help producers prepare for those certifications, but we cannot be the certifying organization.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure and we defer to HDOA for 1) the logistics to establish and implement the GroupGAP food safety training and certification program, and 2) the allocation of funds to the entities capable to facilitate the GroupGap certification program for Hawai'i.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 03/17/2023

Time: 09:30 AM

Location: 325 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Agriculture & Food
Systems

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 1588, SD2 RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY.

Purpose of Bill: Appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 1588, SD2.

Procuring food that has been certified as safe is important when ensuring the health and well-being of our students. This bill will allow the Department to consider more food suppliers for its meal programs, which will assist the Department in meeting the local farm-to-school meal goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

KEKUHAUPIO R. AKANA
Acting Managing Director



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov

March 15, 2023

TO: Honorable Rep. Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
Honorable Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor
Rogerene K.M. Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: March 15, 2023

SUBJECT: SUPPORT OF SB 1588, SD2, RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure. The purpose of this measure is to appropriate funds for the establishment of a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

Our administration **SUPPORTS** this measure for the following reasons:

1. A GroupGAP education and certification program will contribute to Hawai'i's food security by increasing farmers with opportunities to market safe produce through food hubs and State schools, prisons and hospitals.
2. This measure supports the GroupGAP program by reducing the cost of certification for farmers by sharing in the expense of group trainings, providing technical assistance, and auditing. Consequently, these expenses can become cost prohibitive for an individual farmer, resulting in less availability of local produce.
3. This measure will provide farmers with essential training, improve best practices, and assist with developing a Farm Safety Plan to enable farmers to comply with USDA food safety requirements.

For the foregoing reasons, we offer our **SUPPORT** of this measure.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hbf.org; www.hbf.org

March 17, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON SB 1588, SD2
RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice-Chair Kahaloa, 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 1588, SD2, which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

HFB appreciates the support of the legislature in our past efforts to help Hawai'i's farmers achieve food safety certification required by businesses that purchase local produce. Foodborne illnesses can be serious, and we should seek ways to reduce risk. The many criteria associated with food safety certification should not impede safe food. Hawai'i cannot afford to further lose farmers as we strive to increase local food production. We want to incentivize our farmers' ability to continue their operations and provide Hawai'i with abundant safe food. This bill will assist Hawai'i's small farmers with the costs they will incur to become food safety compliant.

USDA GroupGAP is gaining momentum across the nation as a resource for smaller-sized operations that need food safety certification and is the perfect mechanism for Hawai'i's small farmers because it provides a system of shared costs and a supportive network within a group of producers seeking certification. In Hawai'i, many small and mid-scale producers can use food safety certification to gain market access but are still hindered by challenges including individual audit costs and staff to manage the operation's food safety practices, writing a food safety plan, etc. GroupGAP alleviates those burdens by providing technical assistance, in essence, a food safety manager to guide practices and assist with documentation, and because producers share the costs of auditing across all farms in the group.

We support funding to provide training and support for a USDA GroupGAP program to increase the number of food safety-certified farmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD
SYSTEMS**

Rep. Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair

SB1588 SD2

RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Friday, March 17, 2023 9:30 AM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county level Cattlemen's Associations. Our member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of over 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports SB1588 SD2** which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

Achieving food safety certification is an important aspect for sustaining Hawaii's ability to provide local food. The GroupGAP program will reduce costs for producers and make GAP certification more accessible to small farmers and ranchers. We support this measure which will appropriate funds for the establishment of the GroupGAP food safety and certification program.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Nicole Galase
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Managing Director



SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 4:02:46 PM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Scott Wong | Ohana Hui Ventures | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Dear committee members, on behalf of ohana who eventures, a farming operation in Whitmore Village area on state agribusiness Development Corporation lands we feel that it is imperative to support this bill for our Consortium of farmers that we represent. Many of us small local farmers need the assistance and expertise to navigate the Gap food safety program and to be better educated and guided throughout the process of getting certified but also during the life of our farming operation to keep up with food safety illnesses and prevention. Thank you for your time.



67-332 Kaiea Pl.
Waialua, HI 96791-9501
808-383-4481
www.NSEVP.org

March 15, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Friday March 17, 2023, 9:30 a.m.

SUBJECT: Comments on SB1588 SD2– RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Dear Chair Gates, Vice-Chair Kahaloa, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership (North Shore EVP), I would like to extend strong support for SB1588 SD2, which appropriates funds for the establishment of a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

Your committee passed HB1350, the companion bill to this measure in early February. Since then, North Shore EVP started another Hawaii GroupGAP cohort of nine (9) farms and for the first time, had to turn farmers seeking food safety certification away.

While we now have GroupGAP farms in every county, the need to scale the program is greater than ever. Passing this bill will help ensure Hawaii's farmers access to the hands-on technical assistance and training they need to attain USDA Harmonized GAP certification.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Kevin M Kelly, President

SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2023 10:13:09 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Kerry Kakazu | MetroGrow Hawaii | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Since 2014 I have operated the first and largest vertical farm in Hawaii. We strongly support this measure to enhance food safety support services for farmers in the state. The implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act impacts farms of all sizes and while the intent of the rules are clearly beneficial for consumers, it is difficult for smaller farms to comply with all the regulations. We are fortunate to be a part of a Group GAP cohort managed by the North Shore Economic Vitality Project and without their assistance the effort and cost of maintaining food safety certification would have been extremely difficult. NSEVP is a non-profit group that relies on grant funding and philanthropic funds to support its mission. State funding is vital to support them and other groups in their efforts to expand food safety training services in Hawaii. Passage of this bill is critical to the future of farming in Hawaii. Thank you.



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 | Honolulu, HI 96813
P: 808-533-1292 | e: info@hawaiiifood.com

Executive Officers

Charlie Gustafson, Tamura Super Market, *Chair*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Vice Chair*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Secretary/Treas.*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *Executive Director*
John Schliff, Rainbow Sales and Marketing, *Advisor*
Stan Brown, Acosta Sales & Marketing, *Advisor*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Derek Kurisu, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
Rep. Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: March 17, 2023
TIME: 9:30am
PLACE: Via Videoconference

RE: SB1588 Relating to Food Safety

Position: Support

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

HFIA is in support of this measure to appropriate funds for the establishment of a GroquAP food safety training and certification program.

Increasing local food production is a goal we all share. Hawaii's farmers and ranchers face a range of challenges and the economic down turn caused by COVID-19 hit many of our small local farms hard. The financial and administrative burden of meeting state and federal regulations can be a deterrent for those who want to start farming in Hawaii and can make it harder for existing small farms to stay in business. Providing Hawaii farms with the support they need to comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Good Agricultural Practices Certification will help alleviate that burden.

Many of our member retailers require the farms they buy from to have USDA GAP Certification because it confirms that a farm is committed to the highest standard of produce safety and freshness. GAP Certification is also an important first step towards full compliance with the Food Service Modernization Act (FSMA). This bill will help make Hawaii farms and Hawaii agriculture more viable. We encourage you to vote yes on this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



P.O. Box 60
Ninole, HI 96773
Ph: +1 (808) 937 7372
Fax: +1 (808) 443 0401
EIN: 47-3114047

March 17, 2023

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill No. 1588

To the House Committees on Agriculture and Finance:

On behalf of the Hāmākua Institute, I would like to offer my strong support for Senate Bill No. 1588 that appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program. As the convener and facilitator of the Hawai'i Island Agriculture Partnership, I have been interviewing and meeting with producers, processors and food hubs for the past three years. I repeatedly hear concerns raised about increasing food safety compliance requirements and the many challenges associated with becoming GAP certified if they hope to access larger contracts and new market opportunities.

This bill represents a critical step towards opening up opportunities for our state's small farms and improving food safety standards throughout the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and I hope you will recognize the urgent importance of this bill in meeting the state's objectives for improving food self-sufficiency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dennis Flemming", with a small blue dot at the end of the signature.

Dennis Flemming
Founder and Executive Director
Hāmākua Institute
P.O. Box 60, Ninole, HI, 96773
(808)-937-7372

SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 11:39:09 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Cards Pintor | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this bill.

Mahalo nui,

Cards Pintor

SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 3:47:15 PM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dana Keawe | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Support

SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 4:49:47 PM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lisa H. Gibson | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Group Gap is a requirement for food security in Hawaii. Please pass this bill

SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 5:26:39 PM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gary R Ueunten | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

As a small farmer, I strongly support SB1588 and all efforts to ensure food safety.

SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 8:34:24 PM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rick Gaffney | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I would like to strongly reiterate my earlier testimony in solid support for this important piece of legislation. Please pass this bill.

Mahalo!

SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2023 4:20:43 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| James Crum | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

While following Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) is recommended as a good food safety practice for all ag producers, and a requirement for some markets, the overhead of following such guidelines and getting certified can be an overwhelming burden for a small ag producer. Most of Hawaii's ag producers are small, so the ability to combine efforts to allow many to participate in a collaborative and supportive Group GAP education and certification process is a valuable step in helping overcome some of the burden for many Hawaii ag producers and helping ensure food safety practices are implemented by as many of our ag producers as possible. Mahalo for your support of this bill. -Jim

SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2023 6:00:22 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Taylor Kellerman | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

This is an important bill for establishing Hawaii's ability to increase local Ag and Food security.

Mahalo

Taylor Kellerman

SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2023 8:58:38 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Patti Cook | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

To seriously, effectively support local food production, it is imperative that DOA - with Legislative authorization and funding - actively support a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program. Please support this proposed legislation including sufficient funding and enable it to begin as quickly as possible. Mahalo. Patti Cook - Waimea, Island of Hawai'i

SB-1588-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2023 9:54:50 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/17/2023 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Dean Okimoto | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

TESTIMONY ON SB 1588

Feb. 10, 2023

Dean Okimoto

98-351 Koauka Lp. #806

Aiea, Hawaii 96701

To the Chairman, Vice-Chair and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

My name is Dean J. Okimoto and I am a former farmer/owner of Nalo Farms, Inc., for 35 years and former President of the Hawaii State Farm Bureau Federation. I am also currently the Chair of the Hawaii Agriculture Foundation. I also work for Y Hata in trying to get more local products into the Chef Zone location and work with farmers on food safety and agricultural training.

I am writing to you in support of SB 1588 which appropriates funds for Group Gap food safety training and certification training for Hawaii. Over the years I have tried to get more farmers aware of food safety and its inevitable introduction into the food system protocols. Now it has gotten to the point of where the buyers of local products, are going to start demanding that farmers have the certification in order for them to buy their products. As buyers of local produce we are looking for the certification so that we can ensure that our customers can have confidence, that we are doing our best to preserve their health and well being. I also believe that this attitude by buyers is becoming more prevalent in the industry, to the point where those that do have food safety certification are being inundated with customers wanting to buy from them. At some point those that do not have the certification will have either a limited, or no market to sell to. When they are faced with this, will they do it or just quit. They may not have a choice, as when it does become mandatory, for them to sell their products, the line to get trained to do it may be too long and they may have to wait years to go through the necessary training. It is hard

enough to get people to go into farming, once we lose them we will not get them back. The other beauty of the Group Gap, is the cost benefits of going through North Shores programs are much cheaper costs, as their program is structured to make it affordable for farmers. It is also much easier to keep records with their system as all information can be input and accessed by an iPhone.

Farmers can NOT even sell to state institutions, healthcare facilities, the large supermarkets , or even the hotels that service our visitors, without food safety certification. So you can demand all you want that the state buy local, but without this training, that mandate is not achievable!!!

If we are to meet the goals of doubling food production by 2030, it is an absolute must that we fund this program for training of farmers in food safety. NorthShore EVP has a good track record of success in training farmers, but they need more trainers and more money to educate all farmers on all islands to ensure we have a safe and viable food system. They have worked with farms across the islands and have a great track record of onboarding farmers to food safety. They are passionate about what they do, and if we are to educate our farmers quickly, we need to fund NSEVP, because of their experience and knowledge of food safety.

I humbly ask for your support in funding this project for the future of sustainability and food security for Hawaii.

Respectfully,

Dean J. Okimoto

TESTIMONY ON SB 1588

Feb. 10, 2023

Dean Okimoto

98-351 Koauka Lp. #806

Aiea, Hawaii 96701

To the Chairman, Vice-Chair and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

My name is Dean J. Okimoto and I am a former farmer/owner of Nalo Farms, Inc., for 35 years and former President of the Hawaii State Farm Bureau Federation. I am also currently the Chair of the Hawaii Agriculture Foundation. I also work for Y Hata in trying to get more local products into the Chef Zone location and work with farmers on food safety and agricultural training.

I am writing to you in support of SB 1588 which appropriates funds for Group Gap food safety training and certification training for Hawaii. Over the years I have tried to get more farmers aware of food safety and its inevitable introduction into the food system protocols. Now it has gotten to the point of where the buyers of local products, are going to start demanding that farmers have the certification in order for them to buy their products. As buyers of local produce we are looking for the certification so that we can ensure that our customers can have confidence, that we are doing our best to preserve their health and well being. I also believe that this attitude by buyers is becoming more prevalent in the industry, to the point where those that do have food safety certification are being inundated with customers wanting to buy from them. At some point those that do not have the certification will have either a limited, or no market to sell to. When they are faced with this, will they do it or just quit. They may not have a choice, as when it does become mandatory, for them to sell their products, the line to get trained to do it may be too long and they may have to wait years to go through the necessary training. It is hard enough to get people to go into farming, once we lose them we will not get them back. The other beauty of the Group Gap, is the cost benefits of going through North Shores programs are much cheaper costs, as their program is structured to make it affordable for farmers. It is also much easier to keep records with their system as all information can be input and accessed by an iPhone.

Farmers can NOT even sell to state institutions, healthcare facilities, the large supermarkets , or even the hotels that service our visitors, without food safety certification. So you can demand all you want that the state buy local, but without this training, that mandate is not achievable!!!

If we are to meet the goals of doubling food production by 2030, it is an absolute must that we fund this program for training of farmers in food safety. NorthShore EVP has a good track record of success in training farmers, but they need more trainers and more money to educate all farmers on all islands to ensure we have a safe and viable food system. They have worked with farms across the islands and have a great track record of onboarding farmers to food safety. They are passionate about what they do, and if we are to educate our farmers quickly, we need to fund NSEVP, because of their experience and knowledge of food safety.

I humbly ask for your support in funding this project for the future of sustainability and food security for Hawaii.

Respectfully,

Dean J. Okimoto

TESTIMONY ON SB 1588

Feb. 10, 2023

Dean Okimoto

98-351 Koauka Lp. #806

Aiea, Hawaii 96701

To the Chairman, Vice-Chair and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

My name is Dean J. Okimoto and I am a former farmer/owner of Nalo Farms, Inc., for 35 years and former President of the Hawaii State Farm Bureau Federation. I am also currently the Chair of the Hawaii Agriculture Foundation. I also work for Y Hata in trying to get more local products into the Chef Zone location and work with farmers on food safety and agricultural training.

I am writing to you in support of SB 1588 which appropriates funds for Group Gap food safety training and certification training for Hawaii. Over the years I have tried to get more farmers aware of food safety and its inevitable introduction into the food system protocols. Now it has gotten to the point of where the buyers of local products, are going to start demanding that farmers have the certification in order for them to buy their products. As buyers of local produce we are looking for the certification so that we can ensure that our customers can have confidence, that we are doing our best to preserve their health and well being. I also believe that this attitude by buyers is becoming more prevalent in the industry, to the point where those that do have food safety certification are being inundated with customers wanting to buy from them. At some point those that do not have the certification will have either a limited, or no market to sell to. When they are faced with this, will they do it or just quit. They may not have a choice, as when it does become mandatory, for them to sell their products, the line to get trained to do it may be too long and they may have to wait years to go through the necessary training. It is hard enough to get people to go into farming, once we lose them we will not get them back. The other beauty of the Group Gap, is the cost benefits of going through North Shores programs are much cheaper costs, as their program is structured to make it affordable for farmers. It is also much easier to keep records with their system as all information can be input and accessed by an iPhone.

Farmers can NOT even sell to state institutions, healthcare facilities, the large supermarkets , or even the hotels that service our visitors, without food safety certification. So you can demand all you want that the state buy local, but without this training, that mandate is not achievable!!!

If we are to meet the goals of doubling food production by 2030, it is an absolute must that we fund this program for training of farmers in food safety. NorthShore EVP has a good track record of success in training farmers, but they need more trainers and more money to educate all farmers on all islands to ensure we have a safe and viable food system. They have worked with farms across the islands and have a great track record of onboarding farmers to food safety. They are passionate about what they do, and if we are to educate our farmers quickly, we need to fund NSEVP, because of their experience and knowledge of food safety.

I humbly ask for your support in funding this project for the future of sustainability and food security for Hawaii.

Respectfully,

Dean J. Okimoto

March 16, 2023

Senators Gabbard, Richards, DeCoite, Rhoads and Awa,

Hawai'i's agricultural supply chain is in a precarious position. We rely on imports from the mainland to feed our families. Furthermore, the thousands of small farms in Hawai'i struggle to provide even a subsistence level of output for their local communities as large corporate farms dominate production. Finally, regulations like the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act increase the barriers our small farms must overcome to access institutional markets and scale beyond survival.

Beyond the obvious economic imperative to provide a path to growth for our small farms, Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) certification adds risk management and traceability into this critical pillar of our food supply chain. Implementing GAP reduces the risk of foodborne illness. In cases where contaminated products sicken our community; GAP certified producers are better able to participate in recalls and identify root causes. Furthermore, GAP certification is increasingly a prerequisite for small farms to supply the large, institutional wholesalers that can help them to expand. By expanding this mechanism for Hawai'i's small farms to engage the institutional supply chain, we increase opportunity and improve the safety of the food we consume every day.

HB1350 is a robust win-win for our community. It offers tangible and measurable economic benefits, while improving the supply chain's ability to deliver safe food to our tables. Furthermore, The North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership (North Shore EVP), an established leader in agricultural food safety in Hawai'i, is already leading the charge to assist growing small farms obtain GAP certification. North Shore EVP is launching another GroupGAP cohort and stands ready to partner with the Department of Agriculture to ensure access to this training and certification. In this age of uncertainty, it is imperative that HB1350 is passed, to increase the flexibility and resilience of our small farms to prudently grow their operations.

I appreciate your consideration.



David John Buerge
Honolulu, Hawai'i