



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
Wednesday, February 15, 2023 at 1:30 p.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 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 1588 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 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents approved budget. CTAHR defers 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  
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**Date:** 02/15/2023  
**Time:** 01:30 PM  
**Location:** CR 224 & Videoconference  
**Committee:** Senate Agriculture and  
Environment

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** SB 1588 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.

**Department's Position:**

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

Procuring food that has been certified as safe is important when ensuring the health and well-being of our students. This bill would 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.

**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  
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD**  
**CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

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

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2023**  
**1:30 PM**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 224 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 1588**  
**RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY**

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 1588. This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture (DOA) to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program. 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 if there are funds to support this type of training statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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February 8, 2023

Senate Committee on Agriculture & Environment  
*Wednesday February 15, 2023, 1:30 p.m.*

SUBJECT: Comments on SB1588– 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, which appropriates funds for the establishment of a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

Since 2016, North Shore EVP has been working to prepare farmers to fully and equitably participate in Hawaii's commercial and institutional markets by providing food safety training and certification through our USDA GroupGAP program. The federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has implemented more comprehensive food safety regulations for agriculture under the 2011 FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and the implications Hawaii are profound. The need for farm food safety education and compliance is critical to keep Hawaii's 1,400,000 residents and nearly nine million annual visitors safe from foodborne illnesses. During 2016, eight hundred thirty-nine foodborne disease outbreaks were reported nationwide that resulted in 14,259 illnesses, eight hundred seventy-five hospitalizations, and seventeen deaths. Data from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that during that same period, people in Hawaii fell ill during food-related outbreaks about twice as often as their counterparts on the mainland.

Accessing larger commercial and institutional markets that generally require food safety certification is a challenge for Hawaii's 3,682 production farms where over 90% of the farms are under 10 acres and less than 2% are USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified. Furthermore, the majority of Hawaii's commercial and institutional buyers will not purchase produce from farms that cannot provide food safety and traceability documentation required by FSMA. These buyers will import products that cannot be sourced locally to meet their customer's demands, increasing the State's dependency on imported food.

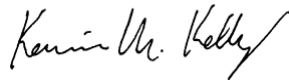
Food safety certification of Hawaii farms is a critical first step toward FSMA compliance and may lead to increased market access and opportunities to increase production for these farmers. The United States Department of Agriculture created the GroupGAP program in 2015 to assist small farms with attaining Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. GroupGAP reduces the cost of food safety certification by spreading the training, technical assistance, and auditing costs between all farms in the group. Hawai'i GroupGAP is the only comprehensive farm food safety training program in Hawai'i that results in USDA Harmonized GAP certification, the standard most closely aligned with the Food and Drug Administration's FSMA food safety guidelines. This program is voluntary and is designed to reduce the farm-level risk of produce-based foodborne illness by applying and documenting recommended best practices.

At the recent (January 11-12) Hawaii Food Systems Summit at UH West Oahu, 100 individuals representing multiple counties, sectors, and interest groups gathered to discuss and prioritize the state, county, and federal policies needed to bolster the growing movement to transform Hawaii's food system - to ensure health, equity, resilience and natural resource sustainability. The summit resulted in the prioritization of twelve (12) food and agriculture policies that will be supported by diverse subject matter

experts and food systems advocates during this legislative session. While food safety was not one of the policies in that list, several of the policies identified are linked to food safety including continued funding for the food hub program, creation of a state food system plan, and the farm to School program.

As such, providing direct training and food safety implementation assistance through GroupGAP helps reduce the burden on small- to medium-sized farms that are seeking to expand operations, enter new, high demand, commercial and institutional markets, or meet the requirements of their current customers. Support for this bill allows more farms to secure Harmonized GAP certification and helps build a growing culture of food safety for Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Kevin M Kelly, President



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

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND  
ENVIRONMENT**

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

**SB1588**  
RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Wednesday, February 15, 2023 1:30 PM  
Conference Room 415 & Videoconference

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, 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** 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







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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT  
Wednesday, February 15, 2023 — 1:30 p.m.

**Ulupono Initiative supports SB 1588, Relating to Food Safety.**

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 the 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 choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

**Ulupono supports SB 1588**, which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

Ulupono supports food safety certification training across the state for small- to medium-sized famers. According to the 2017 USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Census of Agriculture, of Hawai'i's 7,328 farms statewide, 66%, or 4,868 farms, are between 1–9 acres and 78%, or 5,701 farms, produce less than \$25,000 in sales. Hawai'i's agricultural producer majority is small farmers. Many of these small farmers struggle to enter the marketplace, which is heavily driven by food safety compliance. Working off of such tight profit margins, local farmers are in need of support to meet grocer and food distributor demands such as food safety. Measures such as this seek to provide local producers with an opportunity to earn the necessary certifications in order to provide communities with fresh, Hawai'i-grown products.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata  
Director of Government Affairs

*Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i*



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February 15, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**TESTIMONY ON SB 1588**  
RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richard, 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**, 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.

**SB-1588**

Submitted on: 2/12/2023 1:43:48 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/15/2023 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dana Keawe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support

**SB-1588**

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 4:07:04 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/15/2023 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rick Gaffney	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please approve, and pass SB1588 forward, as it is essential to our state being able to realize our goal of increased production and food security. This program requires legislative funding to expand services to more farms across the state because the program has been successful in getting more local farms certified.

Food safety certification is essential to assuring equitable participation in Hawaii's commercial and institutional markets. Other state goals around agriculture and food production depend on having food safety certified farms (like the important Farm to School) program).

Agriculture has struggled statewide for decades, Please pass this bill to remove one of the major roadblocks to our farmer's success.

Mahalo,

**SB-1588**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 5:47:37 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/15/2023 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Taylor Kellerman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is a necessary step towards supporting local agriculture and creating better food security.

Mahalo

Taylor Kellerman

**SB-1588**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 1:02:10 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/15/2023 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nancy Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators Gabbard, Richards and Committee Members:

I submit this testimony in SUPPORT of SB 1588, which would provide funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program. Hawai`i's farmers like us find it difficult to cultivate, harvest and market crops while at the same time complying with the federal Food Safety Modernization Act. While implementing this program plays a key role in providing safe food to Hawai`i's consumers, costs to access training and certification via outside certifying bodies can be astronomical for most farmers. For this reason, a GroupGAP food safety training/certification program would be an valuable tool for Hawai`i's farmers to access – which will ultimately benefit Hawai`i's farming industry as well as consumers. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to please also SUPPORT SB 1588 and pass this out of your committee.

Mahalo for this opportunity to present this testimony supporting SB 1588.

Nancy A. Jones

PO Box 1462, Wai`anae, HI 96792 / Email: nancyhydroalt@gmail.com

**SB-1588**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 10:38:29 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/15/2023 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Whider Sun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm supporting nsevp.org GroupGAP as I'm a participant as a north shore farmer on Oahu and find Nsevp coaches with farmers to pursue All complicated regulation and prosedures, almost every week,not annual as most certifiers' doing, Nsevp keeps following our drive in good GAP on daily or weekly escort, it's somewhat troublesome for the farmer, but it's really doing good.