

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEXTER KISHIDA
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, JANUARY 31, 2024
1:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2361
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2361. This bill establishes two permanent full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) grant specialist positions within the department of agriculture and appropriates moneys to fund the positions. The Department is in strong support of this bill.

Act 248/SLH 2022 changed the means of financing for positions 13201 and 10403, grant administration positions, within the Market Development Branch of the Agricultural Development Division, to N and P funded positions. Federally funded positions for USDA grants are limited by the allowable percent of funds that can be used to 1) administer the competition for the subawards; 2) provide oversight of the subawards -- this includes preparing the contract or agreement, drawing down and disbursing the funds for the subawards; reviewing the mid-term and final reports, closing the contract or agreement; and 3) collect data to submit the annual and final financial and performance reports to the USDA, due every year for the term of the grant.



For the Microgrants for Food Security Program (MGFSP), a P funded program, HDOA may not use more than three percent of the funds to administer a potential \$3 million award over the three-year term of the MGFSP. The \$90,000 total, over the three years of the grant period, per <https://www.salary.com> is not within the average annual grant writer salary in Hawaii that ranges between \$70,000 to \$88,045.

The work of the positions will be for the administration of the competition, oversight of the awards, and collecting the data to meet the required annual performance and fiscal reports and meeting the deadlines of the MGFSP. The MGFSP increases the quantity and quality of locally grown food in Hawaii through maximum awards of \$5,000 to households and \$10,000 to organizations. The third round of the MGFSP resulted in 562 households and 9 organizations receiving awards. The 571 contract agreements are being generated, each of which is time and documentation intensive. The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) is the source of N funds and contributes about \$25,000 total over the three-year grant term, requiring administration, oversight and reporting for an estimated 10 contracts per year.

The Department is aware of the complaints regarding the delays in administering the MGFSP – local families are eager to start their projects to increase the quantity and quality of food that they can grow in their backyards and should not have to wait for up to a year to receive their first payment.

General funded positions, offering competitive salaries, would attract applicants seeking full-time permanent positions. At this moment, one position is filled by an 89-day temporary hire and the other position vacant. It is anticipated that there are sufficient N and P funds for two positions for another year.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

SB-2361

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 1:47:32 PM

Testimony for AEN on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Warren Watanabe	Testifying for Maui County Farm Bureau	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Maui County Farm Bureau supports SB 2361. Our farmers and ranchers need assistance to be able to access grant moneys that are available to be able to compete in a competitive and evolving industry. Mahalo.



January 26, 2024

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Herbert M. “Tim” Richards III, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Comments in Support of SB 2361 Relating to Agriculture (Establishes two permanent full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) grant specialist positions within the department of agriculture and appropriates moneys to fund the positions.)

Wednesday, January 31, 2024, 1:00 p.m.; Conference Room 224 and Videoconference

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 2361**, 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 in Hawaii.

SB 2361. The purpose of this measure is to establish and fund two full-time program specialist positions within the department of agriculture.

LURF’s Position. LURF understands that due to the current absence of grant writing and grant administration expertise within the State’s department of agriculture, many federal funding opportunities for agriculture and related purposes regrettably go unsought or disregarded. The establishment of two program specialist positions to seek and process grants; provide technical assistance and grant program administration; perform needs assessments; and make recommendations to the department and the chairperson of agriculture, are therefore vital to enable the department to establish the expertise required for the State to pursue and fully utilize such funding opportunities.

Many local farmers, ranchers and other agricultural operators also struggle to secure financial support and assistance available to help them obtain the financial help required to operate successful businesses. These agricultural stakeholders would also benefit from the outreach and guidance of business and management specialists who could lend their expertise and provide the informational knowledge and experience necessary to seek out and apply for various sources of funding and support, including available federal funding grants and programs.

Adequate funding is therefore required to address this critical workforce issue, as more expertise, outreach, and support is necessary to assist these farmers, ranchers, and operators to ensure the profitability and long-term sustainability of local agricultural production, as well as to help them work toward the expansion of diversified agriculture and promote the agricultural self-sufficiency of the State.

For the above reasons, LURF **supports SB 2361** and respectfully urges your favorable consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding this measure.

SB-2361

Submitted on: 1/28/2024 5:15:35 PM

Testimony for AEN on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Redfeather	Testifying for Ka Ohana O Na Pua	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Proper funding for Staffing positions at HDOA is critical, especially this one. This position can write for and obtain federal or other sources of funding for specific programs at HDOA. Since they are the least funded State Agency with one of the biggest and most important work loads. funding from the State Legislature is extremely important. Mahalo.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT
Wednesday, January 31, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Ulupono Initiative strongly supports SB 2361, Relating to Agriculture.

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, clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono strongly supports SB 2361, which establishes two permanent full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) grant specialist positions within the Department of Agriculture (DOA).

Ulupono supports the State's efforts to actively pursue grant opportunities that help local agriculturalists. Many federal programs are dedicated to state departments or agencies who can apply for funding to support local initiatives. Establishing a position at the DOA for this work is extremely timely, not only to meet the needs of local farmers and ranchers, but also due to the funding that has been made available by the federal government.

The return on investment for the State can be substantial and transformative. For example, from 2014 to 2023, Ulupono provided funding for grant writers with organizations such as The Kohala Center, the O'ahu Agriculture and Conservation Association, and the Hawai'i Farm Bureau. These efforts brought in a total of approximately \$140 million, 100 times the full grant writing investment. Similarly, Ulupono believes that the State should strongly consider general funding DOA grant writers as they will be well worth the investment, and result in millions of dollars in federal funding to further support the State's agricultural efforts.

We appreciate this committee's effort to hear important measures that look to establish long-term support for our local farmers and ranchers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

Attachment

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i

THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REQUEST THAT WILL *BRING MORE MONEY TO HAWAI'I*

Funding grant writing staff within the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) is a valuable investment that can yield a high return and long-term benefits for the state. The HDOA's operating budget request is \$300,000 in general funds for three currently vacant full-time employee (FTE) positions. Filling these positions follows through on legislators' requests to maximize existing positions toward legislative intent.

HDOA's Ask

HDOA is requesting funding for three existing grant writer positions to be dedicated to securing block and competitive federal grant programs.

- **Examples of block grants:**
 - USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant program (\$500,000)
 - USDA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network program (\$500,000)
 - USDA Micro-Grants for Food Security program (\$3.0 million)
 - USDA Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (\$3.2 million)
- **Additional grants:**
 - Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (\$250,000)
 - Multi-State Specialty Crop Block Grant (\$500,000)
 - Community Wildfire Defense Grant (\$5 million)
 - Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (\$1 million)

Why Grant Writers?

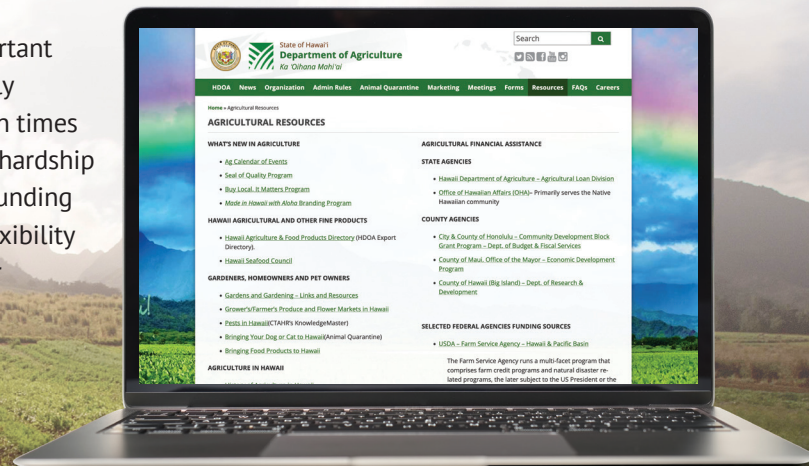
Based on these few examples, this \$300,000 investment could secure \$13.95 million in funding (46.5x return on investment) with more funding available.

Skilled grant writers will help the State to:

- Access federal funds by preparing competitive and compelling grant proposals that align with local farmer needs
- Identify and pursue grants that supplement and leverage existing State resources, maximizing the impact of HDOA's programs

Federal grants will provide:

- Additional means to support important projects and services without solely relying on State funds, especially in times of natural disasters and economic hardship
- A diversified source of long-term funding for HDOA, offering stability and flexibility to address emerging challenges or capitalize on new opportunities



THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REQUEST THAT WILL BRING MORE MONEY TO HAWAII

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Did You Know That ...

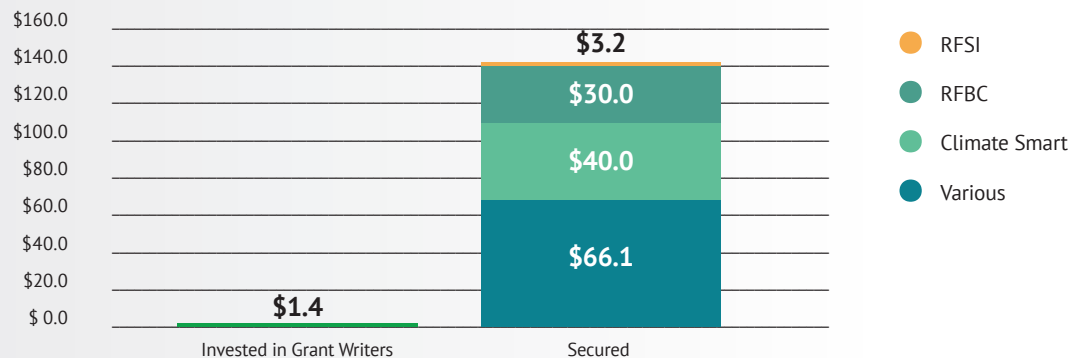
Stimulus bills approved by Congress beginning in 2020 unleashed the largest flood of federal money into the U.S. economy. Roughly \$5 trillion went to households, mom-and-pop shops, restaurants, airlines, hospitals, local governments, schools, and other institutions around the country grappling with the blow inflicted by COVID-19. A number of large USDA grant programs were created. The HDOA needs grant writer support in order to go after these multi-million-dollar opportunities.

Other Benefits for the State

By having grant writers on HDOA's staff, the State will benefit from:

- Grant writing is a specialized skill, and having dedicated grant writers allows other HDOA staff to focus on their core responsibilities leading to better use of resources and expertise.
- Aligned grant-seeking efforts with the HDOA's strategic goals and priorities ensures that all federal funding opportunities will support the agency's long-term objectives.
- Stronger partnership with Hawaii's congressional delegation to better communicate the agricultural industry's needs.

Funding Invested vs. Secured (\$s in Millions)



Return on Investment

Grant writers provide a significant return on investment

Investing in grant-writing capacity not only pays for itself but also brings in funds several times the initial investment.

- The Kohala Center, O'ahu Agriculture & Conservation Association, and Hawaii Farm Bureau invested \$1.4 million in grant writers over the past 10 years.
- Secured ~\$140 million for local agriculture (100x return on investment).
- This included unprecedented funding from the USDA.
 - \$40 million from the Climate-Smart Commodities program to help farmers fund climate-smart farming practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
 - \$30 million from the Regional Food Business Centers (RFBC) program to establish regional centers, which provide farmers with grants and connect them with federal programs.
 - \$3.2 million from the newly created USDA Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) program.

Ulupono's Support of Maui Wildfire Efforts

After the Lahaina wildfire, the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) to support its efforts helping other organizations apply for more than \$60 million from the USDA Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) program, including the Departments of Land and Natural Resources and Hawaiian Home Lands, non-profit organizations and homeowner's associations.

SB-2361

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 12:03:12 PM

Testimony for AEN on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Gottlieb	Testifying for Ponoholo Ranch	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important measure



January 31, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND
ENVIRONMENT
TESTIMONY ON SB 2361
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL BIOSECURITY

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, and Members of the Committees:

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 SB2361, which establishes two permanent full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) grant specialist positions within the Department of Agriculture and appropriates moneys to fund the positions.


There has been an increased need for grants, resulting from a decrease in direct Federal appropriations for agriculture. Unfortunately, the grant program is a very competitive field.

These two positions will help the Agriculture industry to access more opportunities and funding. Skilled and trained grant writers assisting farmers and ranchers will allow those who are hesitant to try and apply for helpful and often needed programs.

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



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

January 31, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 2361
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, and Members of the Committees:

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 strongly supports SB 2361, which establishes two permanent full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) grant specialist positions within the Department of Agriculture and appropriates moneys to fund the positions.

The decrease in direct Federal appropriations for agriculture has resulted in an increased level of dependence on grants. Many federal programs have turned into competitive grant programs.

Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers are finding it difficult to secure the financial support necessary to build capacity. Grant writing for USDA, State, County, and other grants usually involves a very complex application process that can be difficult to navigate through. This often deters farmers and ranchers from applying for USDA and other grants. Well-trained and skilled grant writers would be able to assist farmers and ranchers obtain USDA and other grants by assisting them with applying for and fulfilling the requirements of the grants.

Access to USDA and other grants can result in increased capacity, new business opportunities, increased employment opportunities and address Hawai'i's goals of increased self-sufficiency and sustainability.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

SB-2361

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 11:01:30 AM

Testimony for AEN on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aileen K . F. Yeh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB 2361. Which establishes two permanent full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) grant specialist positions within the Department of Agriculture and appropriates moneys to fund the positions.

SB-2361

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 12:06:37 PM

Testimony for AEN on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Molly Mamaril	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

January 31, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 2361 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference 1:00 PM

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Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Molly Mamaril

SB-2361

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 12:11:20 PM

Testimony for AEN on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Phillipson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, and Members of the Committees:

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Best regards,

Mark Phillipson

Principal, Pacific Ag Consultants

SB-2361

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 1:12:21 PM

Testimony for AEN on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randy Cabral	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

SB-2361

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 2:02:40 PM

Testimony for AEN on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melanie Kim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, and Members of the Committees:

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