

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEXTER KISHIDA
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State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

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

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2024
1:15 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 229 AND VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2803
RELATING TO THE KOHALA DITCH**

Chairs Inouye and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Elefante and Richards, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2803. This bill makes the Department of Agriculture responsible for the routine maintenance of the Kohala ditch. Requires the Department of Agriculture to develop a plan for the refurbishment of the Kohala ditch and submit a report to the Legislature. It also appropriates money and declares that the appropriation exceeds the state general fund expenditure ceiling for 2024-2025. The Department offers comments with strong concerns.

It is our understanding that the Kohala ditch is a private system that has been in disrepair for many years and has somewhat recently experienced a catastrophic flume failure. Additionally, we are unsure of the number of agricultural users that existed before the failure and have anecdotally heard it was in decline. We do understand that this once served as a significant irrigation system and that there is a desire to maintain it. Past and present experience with irrigation systems hints that significant resources, both capital and human, will be necessary to rebuild this system and maintain it in a safe and reliable condition.



Without a clear understanding of the potential liabilities associated with this endeavor, we respectfully suggest that a due diligence study be conducted that will identify the realistic future use, estimated capital costs, and recurring management costs associated with this system. We estimate an initial cost of \$1,500,000 to complete this study of the 23-mile system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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February 5, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND

TESTIMONY ON SB 2803
RELATING TO THE KOHALA DITCH

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
1:15 PM

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and Inouye, Vice-Chairs Richards and Elefante, 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 supports SB 2803, which makes the Department of Agriculture responsible for the routine maintenance of the Kohala ditch and requires the Department of Agriculture to develop a plan for the refurbishment of the Kohala ditch and submit a report to the Legislature.

Since the demise of plantation operations across the islands, we have seen the erosion of irrigation systems. The repair and maintenance of these systems are critical because our farmers and ranchers depend on these irrigation systems for their operations. Water is a basic necessity for farmers and ranchers to maintain and expand their production. The reliability of water is essential for our farmers and ranchers to grow crops and raise livestock efficiently.

The Kohala Ditch serviced thousands of acres of agricultural land in North Kohala. The repair and maintenance of this 14.5-mile irrigation system is critical for Kohala farmers who depend on water for their operations. The 2023 Legislature appropriated \$10,000,000 to restore, reactivate, and repair the Kohala Ditch. However, funding for continued repairs and maintenance is needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND
ENVIRONMENT

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

COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND

Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Chair
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair

SB2803

RELATING TO THE KOHALA DITCH

Monday, February 5, 2024, 1:15 PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Chairs Gabbard and Inouye, Vice Chairs Richards and Elefante, and Members of the Committees,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports SB2803** which makes the Department of Agriculture responsible for the routine maintenance of the Kohala ditch and requires the Department of Agriculture to develop a plan for the refurbishment of the Kohala ditch and submit a report to the Legislature.

Water systems require funding to ensure that these assets continue to remain usable for current and future Hawaii ag producers. Rancher and farmers rely on water to grow our food, and it is paramount that we maintain the systems we have in place. While we advocate for our priority of keeping agricultural land in agricultural production, we must also recognize the needs that producers need to stay in business – the vital being land and water.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. 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.

Nicole Galase
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Managing Director

