

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



**WENDY L. GADY**  
Executive Director

STATE OF HAWAI'I  
**AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
235 S. Beretania Street, Room 205  
Honolulu, HI 96813  
Phone: (808) 586-0186 Fax: (808) 586-0189

**TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM**

Thursday, April 11, 2024  
1:00 PM  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

**GM609 - Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation as the Director, Gubernatorial Nominee, JESSE COOKE, for a term to expire 06-30-2028.**

Chairperson DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of GM609, relating to the consideration and confirmation of Mr. Jesse Cooke's appointment as a Board of Director of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

I have known Mr. Cooke for over 10 years, and he has provided concise feedback on initiatives, projects, and agribusiness value-added delivery chain revenue & cost modeling throughout this time. Having Mr. Cooke joining the ADC Board would support our statutes about having analytical business plans to accompany projects. While staff would develop, his experience and expertise will provide valuable cost-saving ideas and revenue generating ideas to support

agribusinesses across the state from his feedback and worldwide knowledge of best practices.

Mr. Cooke has the expertise to help guide and make significant contribution to ADC. I look forward to working together with Mr. Cooke and respectfully ask the committee to recommend his confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

**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  
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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
AND TOURISM**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2024**  
**1:00 PM**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 229**

**GOVERNORS MESSAGE NO. 609**

Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation, Gubernatorial Nominee, **JESSE COOKE**, for a term to expire 06-30-2028.

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Gubernatorial Nominee, Jesse Cooke, to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC). Support for Jesse is from interactions in his position as the Vice President of Investments & Analytics, at Ulupono, partnering in 2020 to support farmers and ranchers through the COVID-19 Emergency Farmer Relief Program, and again when Jesse organized a coalition of philanthropists to provide \$500,000 in funding to match the HDOA \$500,000 in CARES Act funding for The Food Basket to expend on the DA BUX program.

More recently, Jesse provided the services of a grant writer that resulted in Hawaii being awarded \$3.2 million from the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program that supported "middle-of-the-supply-chain" projects for small farmers and food businesses. Jesse understands Agribusiness and takes actions to support their resilience.



The Maui Wildfires ignited Jesse's interest in federal grant funding that would prevent another event. He researched the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) to a granular level, listing the opportunities for Hawaii stakeholders to participate in the \$200 million in funding to assist communities to prevent, plan, and mitigate for wildfire risks. Jesse conducted online and in-person sessions to help Hawaii communities understand the program. He may be considered an authority on the CWDG, second only to the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization.

In recognition of the actions of Jesse, Ulupono Initiative was the recipient of the 2021 National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Public-Private Partnership Award for his partnering with the HDOA on behalf of Hawaii citizens through agriculture programs that assisted local stakeholders to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic.

Respectfully requesting your consideration to confirm Jesse Cooke to serve on the Board of the ADC. He brings his experience of investments and analytics, agribusiness and federal funding to the ADC Board.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify in strong support.



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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM  
Thursday, April 11, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

**Ulupono Initiative supports GM 608 and GM 609, Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation, Gubernatorial Nominee, Jesse Cooke, for a Term to Expire 06-30-2028.**

Dear Chair DeCoite 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 GM 608/GM 609**, which submits for consideration and confirmation Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

Mr. Cooke's tenure of a decade with Ulupono underscores his extensive experience and dedication to fostering partnerships within the agricultural sector. Throughout this time, he has worked closely with members of the agricultural industry to support local farmers and ranchers with critical investments and grant opportunities. Mr. Cooke's professional background and genuine commitment to the agricultural industry exemplify a true desire and willingness to support local producers to become financially viable and successful businesses within our island community. Always having the hard-working producer's perspective in mind, Mr. Cooke will provide an important, business-savvy voice to the ADC Board and be a true asset to the future of agriculture in the State of Hawai'i.

Ulupono humbly asks this committee and the Legislature for their support of the nomination of Jesse Cooke to serve on the ADC Board.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata  
Director of Government Affairs

*Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i*



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759  
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April 11, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM

**TESTIMONY ON GM 608 & GM 609**

Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation, Gubernatorial Nominee, JESSE COOKE, for a term to expire 06-30-2024 and 06-30-2028

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, 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 strongly supports the confirmation of Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.**

HFB has had the opportunity to work with Mr. Cooke in his current role as Vice President of Investments & Analytics at the Ulupono Initiative. We have found him to be exceptionally qualified, dedicated, honest, and fair in his handling of many complicated agricultural issues.

As an organization deeply rooted in agriculture, HFB values Mr. Cooke's extensive background in finance and investment. His expertise is essential for the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) as it works alongside farmers, ranchers, and aquaculture groups. His efforts are crucial in enhancing the productivity of strategic high-value lands and utilizing water systems and infrastructure for sustainable commercial agriculture, which brings economic, environmental, and social benefits to the people of Hawai'i.

At Ulupono, Mr. Cooke leads a team of investment associates, and provides crucial guidance on the organization's agricultural strategies. His adept financial insights enable Ulupono to identify and pursue investments that significantly contribute to its goal of increasing local food production for Hawai'i families. His ability to foster strong

connections with agricultural stakeholders is demonstrated through initiatives like the Farm to Non-Profit (F2NP) Program, which he helped spearhead with HFB during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative successfully supported Hawai'i's agricultural sector by purchasing and distributing local produce and proteins to food banks and other non-profits, aiding those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and sustaining the local agricultural economy. This win-win program helped keep Hawai'i's farmers farming while also providing nutritional food to those who needed it most.

Mr. Cooke's profound professional experience is matched by his robust work ethic and a deep-seated commitment to supporting Hawai'i's agricultural community. His leadership qualities and financial background will be a tremendous asset to the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

Please accept our strong support for the nomination of Mr. Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.



### Officers

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North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman  
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Vincent Kimura  
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska  
Kauai

Aloha Chair Chair Decoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Senate Energy, Economic Development, And Tourism Committee,

The Hawaii Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFUU strongly supports GM608/GM609.**

Jesse Cooke's diverse experiences and passionate advocacy for Hawaii's agricultural sector further underscore his suitability for the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation. His work at Ulupono Initiative, deeply rooted in leveraging financial expertise to foster agricultural growth and profitability, aligns perfectly with the objectives and challenges faced by Hawaii's agricultural community. Jesse's enthusiasm for supporting local entrepreneurs and agriculture companies reflects a genuine commitment to cultivating a sustainable and resilient local food system. His initiatives, ranging from improving access to funding for Hawaii's farmers to prioritizing the maintenance and upgrade of water irrigation systems, illustrate a proactive approach to addressing critical issues in Hawaii's agricultural infrastructure and food security.

Moreover, Jesse's public statements on the importance of a robust local agriculture sector for Hawaii's food security highlight his vision for a more self-reliant state that nurtures its farmers and agricultural innovation. By advocating for strategic investment in local agribusiness and infrastructure, Jesse demonstrates an understanding of the multifaceted solutions required to achieve sustainable growth. His leadership in establishing and expanding successful food programs like DaBux and calling for strong governance in support of local agriculture reveals a strategic mindset geared towards actionable results.

Jesse represents a blend of financial acumen, strategic vision, and a heartfelt commitment to Hawaii's agricultural prosperity, making him an invaluable asset to the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipō Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF





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April 2 2024

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair  
Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

*RE: GM608 & GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation*

Dear Senators:

I am writing to express my strong support for Jesse Cooke to become a Board member of the Agribusiness Development Corporation. I have known Mr Cooke professionally since 2016 when I formed my non-profit HIplan. Jesse was/is Vice President of Ulupono Initiative who have been a consistent donor to HIplan since our beginning. Over the years Jesse has served as a judge for our annual business plan competitions (Hawaii Island Business Plan Competition) where he was always engaged and offered thoughtful, helpful advice and encouragement to our entrepreneurs. I greatly admire Jesse's empathy for Hawaii ag folks and his solid dedication to financial reality, he always studies the financials.

We invited Jesse to moderate a panel discussion on investing in Hawaii's Ag future at our 2022 Tropical AgTech Conference in Hilo. He started the panel with an excellent overview of the economics of Hawaii Agriculture which really set the stage for an excellent discussion. Under Jesse's guidance that panel was for me a highlight of the Conference. You can see Jesse's presentation starting at about 5:00 minutes in this video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2kREJobKz4>

Jesse is a most responsive, engaged professional. When I email him, I get an immediate response. When I call him, I get a call back. While this sounds simple, it reflects his professional attitude.

Prior to forming HIplan, I developed the World's first SPF shrimp broodstock company, High Health Aquaculture (HHA) based at NELHA in Kona. HHA was the beginning of what became a new industry in Hawaii – SPF Shrimp Broodstock, which exports more than \$30 M of product per year. We did business in 26 countries, and I understand how agribusiness works. After 20 years building that business, we sold HHA to an Asian multinational, which expanded the business and continues in business at NELHA today.

I strongly support the nomination of Jesse Cooke to join the Board of the Agribusiness Development Corporation. He will be an excellent member and contribute immensely to the Board's mission.

Aloha,

Jim Wyban PhD  
President HIplan



3 April 2024

**Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism**

The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair

The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

*RE: GM608 and GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation*

Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for **GM608** and **GM609** to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

Aloha Harvest is the largest food rescue and redistribution organization in Hawaii. Free of charge to both food donors and recipient agencies, Aloha Harvest is a key logistical partner coordinating difficult, often same day, deliveries of prepared foods and stock items. Now entering its 25<sup>th</sup> year of operation, Aloha Harvest has curated a network of over 1,000 collaborators looking to *Waste Less, Feed More*.

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) plays a critical role in supporting Hawaii's agricultural industry and its overall food-security stance. Food security is a central focus of Aloha Harvest's mission, and we appreciate the opportunity to support leaders who can help guide the ADC in this effort.

Jesse brings a strong skillset in investment and financial analysis. This alone would make him a valuable asset on any board. What makes Jesse a very compelling candidate is his vast knowledge of funding available to the agricultural stakeholders in our community, and his experience in connecting these stakeholders to those funds.

We respectfully request your support of GM608 and GM609. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Jesse Cooke.

With Regards,

**Brandon Tomita**

Executive Director



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**Testimony in Support of [GM608](#) and [GM609](#)// Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse K. Cooke, Board  
Of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation  
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
April 11, 2024**

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

Thank you for this opportunity to provide strong support for GM608/GM609 to confirm Jesse K. Cooke to the Board Of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC). Please accept this letter on behalf of myself, Keoni Lee, CEO of Hawai'i Investment Ready (HIR), along with select members of HIR's Enterprise Portfolio, [Food Systems](#) Enterprise & Funder Cohort, and network. The food systems cohorts represent high-potential innovators across the food system value chain and funders from government, philanthropic, and private sectors who share a common objective of a viable and resilient local food system. The Funder is comprised of 24 Hawai'i investors across philanthropy, government, and private sector committed to investing strategically in food systems change. Collectively, we represent tens of millions of dollars in annual investments in agriculture in Hawai'i.

It is critical to have experienced leaders to meet the state's goal of doubling local production as a key element of economic self-sufficiency and sustainability for Hawaii. As a part of our economy making significant investments in a local and regenerative food system, we offer our highest support of Jesse K. Cooke's nomination and uplift his years of finance, investment, policy, economics, and food systems experience and commitment to Hawai'i's agricultural producers resiliency and profitability. Mr. Cooke has demonstrated skill in collaborating effectively with a range of stakeholders, giving him a broad perspective and understanding of the complex challenges and unique opportunities to strategically invest and strengthen food systems.

Mr. Cooke brings a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities in moving funding into food & agriculture, with deep experience in strategy, critical analytics, and technical due diligence experience. His leadership has built trust and respect with the farmers, growers, and ranchers working to grow more local food for Hawaii's families. This sector has sometimes been fragmented, and he has cultivated deep relationships and insights to understand the challenges, opportunities and solutions different agricultural operations are facing. Mr. Cooke's work extends

beyond number-crunching to visiting local farms and engaging with the agricultural community. His confirmation would bring invaluable perspective and more and stronger partnerships to the table for the ADC board's work in the food system.

HIR and our network are tremendously grateful for Mr. Cooke's contributions to our work and Hawaii's Food Systems. We value his knowledge, diligence, thoughtfulness, creativity, and tireless advocacy for local farmers and ranchers.

We respectfully request your support of GM608 & GM609. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keoni Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Keoni" being more prominent than the last name "Lee".

Keoni Lee, Hawai'i Investment Ready  
'Olu Campbell, Hawai'i Land Trust  
Polipoli Farms  
The Food Basket Inc., Hawai'i Island's Food Bank  
Mary Spadaro, Slow Money Hawaii  
Aaron Ellis, Feed The Hunger Foundation  
Sarah Freeman, County of Hawai'i  
Janel Yamamoto  
Usha Kilpatrick



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April 04, 2024

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism

The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair

The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

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

*RE: GM608 & GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation*

Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for GM608 and GM609 to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership (North Shore EVP) facilitates the only USDA approved GroupGAP program in the state of Hawaii. Hawaii GroupGAP provides the technical assistance and administrative support that small and medium sized farmers need to attain USDA food safety certification, a key requirement for selling products into commercial and institutional markets. The Hawaii GroupGAP program has benefited from support from Jesse Cooke, including our strategic approach to strengthening market access for farmers, and improving the amount of locally produced food entering our regional markets.

The ADC currently manages over 20K acres of farmland on Oahu and Kauai, as well as agricultural water systems and facilities. These holdings make the ADC one of the most important government organizations influencing the future of Hawaii's farming sector. ADC has been tasked with guiding the transformation of Hawaii's agriculture industry from a historical focus on sugar and pineapple to a more diverse array of crops. Through this work, ADC can help to increase Hawaii's food security and strengthen the economic prospects of local farmers and ranchers, playing a leading role in supporting and revolutionizing Hawaii's agricultural industry.

However, this work will not be easy and will require a broad range of skill sets and experiences, from ADC's staff as well as from ADC's board members. Board members are crucial to ensuring that projects are being developed and carried out in an effective, transparent, and cost-efficient manner.

Jesse's background of over 20 years of investment, financial analysis/modeling, business lending, fundraising, research, and project development experience is a valuable asset for decision-making in a position that involves the development, financing, and enhancement of agribusiness enterprises. For the past 10 years, Jesse has been deeply involved in Hawaii's agricultural industry, demonstrating practical knowledge and hands-on involvement with the issues that are most pressing for farmers and ranchers. This extensive experience in the industry will aid him in decision-making as a Board Member of the ADC. In particular, Jesse's investment acumen, problem-solving skills, and fundraising experience supporting Hawaii's farmers and ranchers will benefit the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation. He has the background to identify and go after funding opportunities that will help to advance the development of ADC's many projects. As a board member, Jesse will help ensure that those projects provide a positive ROI for Hawaii's farmers/ranchers and Hawaii's food security. He will be able to clearly communicate the goals and objectives that ADC projects will accomplish for Hawaii's farming sector, providing clarity to the public about the success of these measures. We believe that Jesse Cooke's confirmation to the ADC Board of Directors will be an overwhelmingly positive contribution to the agricultural sector.

North Shore EVP respectfully requests your support of GM608 and GM609. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

  
Melissa Rhoden, Food Safety Director



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

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM  
Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

**GM609**

Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation

Thursday, April 11, 1:00 PM  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Chair Decoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports GM608** for the consideration and confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

Jesse Cooke would be an asset to the Agribusiness Development Corporation. With experience in Hawaii's agricultural industry ranging from for-profit investments to non-profit programs, his skillset will lend well to helping ADC to achieve goals of supporting agriculture in a way that benefits both the producer and the consumer. He is familiar with the a breadth of partners in the agricultural industry, and his strong relationships within his network will help to ensure that a wide variety of agricultural interests are represented on the board. In our experience working with Mr. Cooke, we have found that he is a critical thinker and takes action to solve issues.

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





April 4, 2024



Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite  
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee:

*RE: GM608 and GM609 Gubernatorial Nominee Jeese Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before the Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism, in **strong support** of GM608 and GM609, the confirmation of Mr. Jesse Cooke as Board of Director, Agribusiness Development Corporation (“ADC”).

I am the Managing Partner of Commercial and Business Lending, a small business that specializes in government loan programs targeted at the agricultural and food industries. In Mr. Cooke’s capacity as the VP of Investments & Analytics with Ulupono Initiative (“Ulupono”), I have collaborated with him on various matters related to supporting the agriculture and food sectors throughout Hawaii.

Mr. Cooke’s main focus at Ulupono has been to seek out and support organizations working to increase local food production. He is fervent about helping agriculture businesses grow and become profitable, while increasing local food production and making it more resilient. He also knows the value of relationships and makes the effort to meet up with farmers and food producers on all of the islands. This allows him to see first-hand the challenges businesses face and the possible opportunities and solutions. He has also been a staunch supporter of the Da Bux program, which Ulupono has funded along with other private funders and the State of Hawaii.

Mr. Cooke is a strong proponent of taking advantage of funding opportunities available to the agriculture and food sectors through federal grants. However, due to a variety of reasons and barriers, the agriculture and food industries have not been able access much needed grant funding. Ulupono has invested more than \$1.4 million in grant writer positions that has brought in \$140 million in federal grants to Hawaii. Mr. Cooke has pushed hard for the creation of grant-writer positions within the State Department of Agriculture to empower the State to apply for and utilize federal grant funding that has been elusive to government entities. Federal funding could help offset costs to the State in supporting the agriculture and food sectors.

Mr. Cooke helped to launch the Hawai‘i Ag Finance Hui (aka Ag Microfinance Hui) that was founded in 2018 by Ulupono in partnership with agricultural community lenders, Feed the Hunger

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Fund, Slow Money Hawai'i, and The Kohala Center. The intent in bringing Hawai'i's agricultural funders together was to identify collective ways to address the financial needs of businesses that operate across Hawai'i's agricultural and food sectors. The Ag Finance Hui brought together 18 agricultural funders and related organizations to address the financing needs of businesses, and Commercial and Business Lending is a participant.

Mr. Cooke has the financial acumen, private sector thinking and skillset, and out-of-the box-funding experience and expertise to be a tremendous asset to ADC. And, his work at Ulupono has been invaluable to the agriculture and food sectors throughout Hawai'i.

I hope that you allow Mr. Cooke the opportunity to contribute to ADC's mission by providing his leadership and advocacy to transform agribusiness into the dynamic growth industry that allows Hawai'i's people to thrive. I highly recommend Mr. Cooke for the position of Board of Director, Agribusiness Development Corporation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

Respectfully,



Jason T. Okuhama

Commercial and Business Lending



Germinate by HIplan

**April 6, 2024**

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

**Subject: GM608 & GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation**

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

I am writing this letter to offer my enthusiastic support for Jesse Cooke's nomination to the Board of Directors of the Hawaii Agribusiness Development Corporation. I have firsthand familiarity with Jesse's impressive character, relevant experience, and deep commitment to the advancement of Hawaii's agricultural industry.

Jesse's current role as Vice President at Ulupono Initiative showcases his expertise in financial due diligence, investment strategy, and building vital relationships within the agricultural sector. His focus on increasing local food production in Hawaii demonstrates his profound understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing our state's agricultural landscape.

Jesse's financial acumen and investment analysis skills make him a valuable asset for determining the viability of agribusiness projects. Furthermore, his commitment to personally visiting farms across the islands and engaging with the agricultural community demonstrates his willingness to go beyond spreadsheets and grasp the intricate realities faced by farmers, ranchers, and other growers. This hands-on approach ensures he possesses a nuanced perspective on industry needs.

I confidently believe that Jesse Cooke's blend of financial expertise, investment insight, industry knowledge, and genuine passion for Hawaii's agriculture make him an



Germinate by HIplan

exceptional candidate for the Board of Directors of the Hawaii Agribusiness Development Corporation. His dedication to sustainable local food production aligns directly with the Corporation's mission.

I strongly urge you to consider his nomination favorably, and I wholeheartedly support his appointment to this important role.

Sincerely,

Jason Ueki  
Executive Director  
Germinate by HIplan

**GM-609**

Submitted on: 4/7/2024 8:44:58 PM

Testimony for EET on 4/11/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Matthew B. Johnson	Testifying for Oahu Fresh	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We strongly support Jesse Cooke's nomination



April 8, 2024

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

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

*RE: GM608 & GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation*

Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for GM608 and GM609 to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

I am the President/Owner of MetroGrow Hawaii, the first and largest indoor hydroponic farm in the state. Since 2014 we have been providing premium leafy greens to local restaurants and gourmet markets. I have had the pleasure of knowing and interacting with Jesse Cooke since 2016 and he has been an extremely valuable resource for us because of his knowledge and understanding of the local agricultural landscape.

I understand that the State is looking to the ADC to become a more active player in expanding and diversifying our agricultural economy as we continue to transition from our past plantation-based agricultural system. The organization will need to be proactive, innovative and decisive if the State is to truly support our farming community, develop a thriving agricultural economy and increase food self-sufficiency and security for all of Hawai'i.

I strongly believe that Jesse Cooke possesses all the attributes necessary to be a valuable addition to help the ADC achieve its objectives. His current role as Vice President, Investments & Analytics at Ulupono Initiative with an emphasis on agriculture imbues him with both a knowledge of our agricultural sector and the business acumen to provide critical analysis of the issues facing local farming businesses. He has also been active in providing direct support to our farmers by spearheading efforts at Ulupono Initiative that provided funding to the Hawaii Farm Bureau to purchase produce from local farmers during the pandemic (we were a direct beneficiary of that program). The Hawai'i Farmers Union, Agricultural Leadership Foundation of Hawai'i and Go Farm Hawai'i are among many other community organizations that have received grant support from Ulupono Initiative and Jesse's involvement. His dedication to supporting agriculture in Hawai'i is undeniable and the opportunity to add his experience to the ADC board would truly be a win for all of us.

I strongly support Jesse Cooke's appointment to the ADC board and respectfully request your support of GM608 and GM609. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kerry Kakazu".

Kerry Kakazu  
MetroGrow Hawaii

350 Ward Ave. Suite 106-13  
Honolulu, HI 96814  
<http://metrogrowthawaii.com>



66-1475 Pu'u Huluhulu Rd., Kamuela, HI 96743

April 8, 2024

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair  
Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

*RE: GM608 & GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation*

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony and support for GM608 and GM609 to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Hawaii Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

We are the owners of Hawaii Farming LLC, a large commercial greenhouse agricultural operation located in the Lalamilo Farms area of Waimea. We utilize controlled environment and sustainable farming practices together with technology and robust food safety protocols to grow local fresh vegetables at large scale. Our farm products are comprised of several well-known brands and are distributed via major wholesalers and retailers to consumers across the State of Hawaii.

We have had the pleasure of working with Jesse for a number of years via his role at Ulupono Initiative and in jointly participating in agricultural related forums, and can wholeheartedly attest to his exceptional skills, dedication, and passion for agriculture and sustainable development.

Jesse has a proven track record of leadership and strategic vision in the agricultural sector, making him a highly qualified candidate for the Board of Directors of ADC. His experience from both the private and quasi-public sector will allow him to bring an additive voice to ADC. Further his experience in finance, agriculture, sustainability technology, business development, and regulatory matters will bring great practical and valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing Hawaii's agricultural industry.

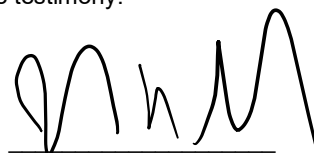
One of Jesse's key strengths is his ability to foster collaboration and build strong relationships with stakeholders across the agricultural value chain. He understands the importance of supporting local farmers and businesses while promoting innovation and sustainability in agribusiness. His commitment to promoting economic growth and job creation in Hawaii aligns perfectly with the goals of ADC.

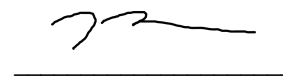
We have no doubt that Jesse's expertise, integrity, and dedication will make him a valuable asset to the Board of Directors of ADC. His innovative ideas and strategic thinking will contribute significantly to the ADC's efforts in advancing Hawaii's agriculture sector and ensuring its long-term success. We wholeheartedly endorse Jesse Cooke for this important position and urge you to consider his candidacy favorably.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

  
Leonard Feder, Owner  
Hawaii Farming LLC

  
John Seward, Owner  
Hawaii Farming LLC

  
Eric Batha, Owner  
Hawaii Farming LLC

LARRY JEFTS FARMS, LLC  
PO BOX 27  
KUNIA, HAWAII 96759  
(808) 688-2892

GM 608, GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke  
Agribusiness Development Corporation Board of Directors  
Senate Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism Committee Hearing  
Thursday, April 11, 2024 – 1:00 PM

Testimony By: Larry Jeffs  
Position: Support

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Senate EET Committee:

I am Larry Jeffs, owner and operator of Larry Jeffs Farms, LLC. We have more than 42 years of Hawaii farm experience on Molokai and Oahu. Our family farms grow about 1 million pounds weekly of import replacement produce. I am a volunteer director, serving as Chair of the West Oahu Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). I have been an officer of the Hawaii Farm Bureau for many years.

Jesse Cooke's academic background in economics and finance, and professional experience in developing, evaluating, and implementing strategic initiatives to achieve business objectives will be an asset to ADC. Since 2014, Mr. Cooke has served as Vice President of Investments & Analytics for Ulupono Initiative. His talents have honed Ulupono's agricultural investment strategy to meet its mission of more local food production for Hawaii's community.

In this capacity, Mr. Cooke goes beyond analyzing investments. He takes the initiative to meet with the agricultural community to better understand the opportunities for farm and ranch business challenges. He demonstrates this knowledge through articles about the need to invest in repairing and maintaining Hawaii's irrigation infrastructure, climate change from an agricultural perspective, and what can be done for food security in Hawaii.

Your consideration of Jesse Cooke's gubernatorial appointment to the ADC Board of Directors is appreciated. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.

**GM-609**

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 1:34:00 PM

Testimony for EET on 4/11/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Diane Ley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Honorable Chair DeCoite & Vice-Chair Wakai and Committee Members,**

**It is my pleasure to offer my strong support of GM608 and GM609 appointing Jesse Cooke to serve as a board member of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).**

**I have previously served on the ADC so have familiarity with its legislative mandate. I have also served alongside Jesse for the past seven (7) years on the board of the Agricultural Leadership Foundation of Hawaii and on a recent systems analysis of what is working well and not well for producers in the state.**

**I have found Jesse to be thorough in his research and analysis. He comes to meetings prepared and ready to engage in discussion and post-meeting follow-up. He understands and aligns his actions with organizational fiduciary duties, equity and ethical responsibilities.**

**Jesse's education and background aligns with much of what lies ahead for the ADC and its future growth and success. This includes the need for financial models and modeling, qualitative and financial analysis, due-diligence, and development, evaluation and implementation of strategic initiatives to achieve business objectives - all exceptional skills and experience Jesse will bring to the ADC board.**

**Jesse has worked to develop relationships with producers across the state in an effort to understand the challenges and opportunities facing individual businesses and the collective perspective and needs of the agricultural sector. When he approaches his work in agriculture it is with a lens to how he can help individual companies grow and become profitable, while increasing local food production and resiliency.**

**I strongly believe Jesse Cooke will make an exceptional board member. Mahalo for your consideration.**



**GM-609**

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 11:32:18 AM

Testimony for EET on 4/11/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Laurie Ho	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Jesse K Cooke to serve on the ADC Board of Directors. thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony via email.

**GM-609**

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 12:35:30 PM

Testimony for EET on 4/11/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lyle Roe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In *strong* support.

**GM-609**

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 4:02:13 PM

Testimony for EET on 4/11/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Noa Lincoln	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha members of the committee -

This testimony is in strong support of confirming Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC). I have had the pleasure of serving with Mr. Cooke on other advisory boards, and I have found him to bring a clear and sensible perspective to a broad range of issues, coupled with an unwavering consideration of the fiscal responsibility associated with any decision.

I testify today as an individual, but as a highly informed individual. I wear many hats concerning the post-plantation agricultural industry in Hawai‘i, being a farmer, a researcher with the University of Hawaii, and an advisor/board member to multiple organizations focused on improving Hawai‘i’s food system. In this, my goals align with those of the ADC: to guide the transformation of Hawai‘i’s agriculture industry from a historical focus on sugar and pineapple to a more diverse array of crops. This is a challenging goal with many barriers. The ADC can and should (but I would argue historically has not) play a key role in achieving this goal, and I believe that Mr. Cooke would be an asset in the effort.

Jesse has excellent working knowledge of the agricultural landscape in Hawai‘i, two decades of investment and financial analysis experience, and I know him to be a thoughtful and creative problem solver. Perhaps even more importantly, Jesse is extremely passionate about food and agriculture in Hawai‘i, and is willing to work extremely hard to support our agricultural industry. These traits and many more make Jesse Cooke an excellent candidate to serve as a member of the Board of Directors for the ADC.

I request your support of GM609. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Mahalo - Noa Lincoln

**KD Dominus LP • 1960 The Alameda, Suite 150 • San Jose, CA 95126**

**Testimony in Support of [GM608](#) and [GM609](#)// Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse K. Cooke, Board  
Of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation**

**Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism**

The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair

The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

April 05, 2024

Honorable Chair DeCoite and Honorable Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for GM608 and GM609 to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

For the past 11 years I have been working as a coach and an investor with Hawai'i for profit and nonprofit enterprises delivering products and services across the food value chain. It is my observation that we have an opportunity to leverage investments made during covid in the food sector to build a more secure food system in Hawai'i.

ADC is an essential service organization serving the transition of Hawai'i's agricultural industry from plantation era farming to a more diverse and resilient agricultural industry, a necessity if we are to be food secure.

Jesse Cooke's 20 plus years of experience in finance, research and development would be a tremendous addition to the skills of the existing board members and staff. Also, his practical and hands-on knowledge of the local food sector, and the opportunities and challenges farmers and ranchers face, would be invaluable to ADC's decision making process.

I respectfully request your support of GM608 and GM609. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Lisa Kleissner, Partner

KD Dominus LP

**GM-609**

Submitted on: 4/9/2024 1:22:19 PM

Testimony for EET on 4/11/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patrick Ka'eo Ornellas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support **Jesse Cooke** as your best member choice for Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation, Gubernational Nominee, term to expire 06-30-2028.

Ka'eo Ornellas

**David Kaulike Chun**

[DavidKChun9@gmail.com](mailto:DavidKChun9@gmail.com) | 703-304-9209

April 11, 2024

The Honorable Lynn DeCoite  
Chair  
Committee on Energy, Economic  
Development, and Tourism  
Hawaii State Senate, Room 230  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Glenn Wakai  
Vice Chair  
Committee on Energy, Economic Development,  
and Tourism  
Hawaii State Senate, Room 407  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice-Chair Wakai, and Senators Fukunaga, Mercado Kim, and Fevella:

Subject: Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation

Thank you for the opportunity to express my strong support for Mr. Jesse Cooke to serve on the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

My name is Dave Chun. I served 22 years in Congress, of which 10 years were focused on crafting agriculture policy for two Hawaii Members of Congress. During my tenure, Jesse became an integral part of a group of folks from whom I would seek counsel when formulating Hawaii-beneficial policies and recommendations. His deep knowledge of Hawaii's food production landscape and understanding of production agriculture and small agribusinesses were evident from the start and are significant reasons for me to lend my voice in solid support of Jesse's nomination to the ADC Board of Directors.

Jesse is eminently qualified to help Hawaii advance local food production. He understands the complex and intertwined profitability challenges faced by Hawaii agribusinesses as they manage energy, labor, real property, transportation, tax, and input costs. He is an astute, knowledgeable, compassionate, focused, and multi-dimensional problem-solving-oriented decision-maker.

Throughout his professional career, Jesse has applied his exceptional finance and investment expertise to ensure a return on investment (ROI) for those he served. These skill sets will advance ADC's mission and ensure public tax dollars are wisely invested to maximize ROIs. This includes constructing a vibrant third economic pillar, expanding business and employment opportunities, and ensuring resilience during global calamities and trade disruptions.

ADC's role in building food security for our isolated archipelago is critical. Confirming Jesse to serve on the ADC Board of Directors is a wise choice, and I urge your favorable consideration of his nomination.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

*David K. Chun*

David K. Chun

**GM-609**

Submitted on: 4/10/2024 5:33:47 AM

Testimony for EET on 4/11/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

April 10, 2024

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism

The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair

The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

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

*RE: GM608 & GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation*

Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for GM608 and GM609 to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

I am the director of Diversified Agriculture and Land Stewardship for Kualoa Ranch, as well as the board chair for Hawaii Rangeland Stewardship Foundation, Land and Water committee chair for Hawaii Cattleman's Council, 2024 Ag Conference chair, and current board member of West Oahu Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Ag Leadership Foundation of Hawaii.

ADC has the potential to serve a tremendously important role in strengthening the business structure and economic health of Hawaii Agriculture.

I have had the pleasure of serving on various boards and panels with Mr Cooke, and his economic aptitude, critical thinking, and long range planning skills would be a tremendous asset to ADC.

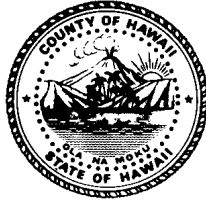
I respectfully request your support of GM608 and GM609. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Taylor Kellerman



Mitchell D. Roth  
Mayor



Douglass S. Adams  
Director

Frecia Cevallos  
Deputy Director

## County of Hawai'i

### DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

25 Aupuni Street, Room 1301 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720-4252  
(808) 961-8366 • Fax (808) 935-1205  
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**LATE**

April 10, 2024

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair  
Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

*RE: GM608 & GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation*

Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for GM608 and GM609 to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

Jesse Cooke has demonstrated profound commitment and effectiveness in enhancing the scale, strength, and profitability of Hawaii's farming sector. Through his extensive background in financial management and strategic development, including impactful roles during the COVID pandemic to bolster local food systems amidst supply chain disruptions, he has prepared himself well for this position. His focus on developing financially viable and sustainable agricultural projects aligns perfectly with ADC's mission.

His expertise in investment strategy and economic assessments ensures that ADC projects under his guidance would not only aim for a high return on investment but also significantly contribute to the state's agricultural outputs and food security. Moreover, Jesse's problem-solving skills, investment acumen, and fundraising experience equip him to handle complex projects that the ADC envisions to undertake, particularly in innovative and climate-smart agriculture.

We respectfully request your support for Jesse Cooke's nomination to the ADC Board. His leadership qualities and professional experience are exactly what the Board needs to propel Hawaii's agricultural development forward.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. If you have any questions, please contact me, with any questions or concerns.

very respectfully,

Sarah Freeman  
Food Systems Specialist  
County of Hawai'i  
Department of Research and Development  
808.961.8582



**LATE**

1928 Republican Street Honolulu, HI 96819 Phone: (808) 845-9868 Fax: (808) 848-7848

April 10, 2024

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

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

*RE: GM608 & GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors,  
Agribusiness  
Development Corporation*

Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for GM608 and GM609 to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

My name is Jimmy Chan and I own and operate the Hawaiian Chip Company. The Hawaiian Chip Company manufactures chips from locally grown agriculture like Okinawan sweet potatoes, orange sweet potatoes, breadfruit, and taro. The company buys over 200,000 lbs of locally grown produce a year and would buy more if more were available.

The ADC should be a conduit for diversifying crops to match actual opportunities. This would support local farms, stores and value added food manufacturers.

Jesse Cooke has ample experience working farmers, retailers, and factory operators. He understands how to connect all three sectors in a cohesive plan to grow and diversify a profitable agricultural industry in Hawaii.

I respectfully request your support of GM608 and GM609. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jimmy Chan", written in a cursive style.

Jimmy Chan  
General Manager/Owner

**LATE**

**GM-609**

Submitted on: 4/11/2024 7:13:21 AM

Testimony for EET on 4/11/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hao Nguyen	Testifying for Pacific Gateway Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 10, 2024

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism

The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair

The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

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

*RE: GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation*

I thank you for this opportunity to provide support for GM609 to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

As the Deputy Director of Programs at Pacific Gateway Center, a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to empowering refugees, immigrants, low-income, and vulnerable populations in Hawaii, I have had the privilege of working closely with Mr. Cooke in our efforts to promote Hawaii's local food production and sustainability. Mr. Cooke, currently the Vice President of Ulupono Initiative, has been an invaluable partner in our mission to support immigrant and socially disadvantaged farmers in gaining access to land, markets, and capital.

Through his role at Ulupono Initiative, Mr. Cooke has demonstrated a deep commitment to cultivating relationships with farmers, understanding their challenges firsthand, and identifying opportunities and solutions to address them. His expertise and experience in the agricultural sector have been instrumental in advancing our programs and initiatives aimed at increasing local food production and building a sustainable food system for Hawaii.

Mr. Cooke's nomination to serve on the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation is a testament to his dedication to the future of Hawaii's agricultural industry. The ADC plays a crucial role in supporting the transition of Hawaii's agricultural sector from

plantation-era farming to more diversified, long-term agricultural use. With over 20,000 acres of farmland under its management on Oahu and Kauai islands, as well as agricultural water systems and facilities, the ADC is one of the most influential government organizations shaping the future of Hawaii's farming sector.

I am confident that Mr. Cooke, with his expertise, experience, and commitment to Hawaii's agricultural community, will make significant contributions to the ADC's mission of increasing Hawaii's food security and strengthening the economic prospects of local farmers and ranchers. I urge the Senate Committee to confirm his nomination without hesitation.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of Mr. Jesse Cooke's nomination to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation. I respectfully request your support of GM609.

Respectfully with Aloha

Hao Nguyen, Ph.D.

Deputy Director of Programs

Phone: 808-650-9984

E-mail: [hao@pacificgatewaycenter.org](mailto:hao@pacificgatewaycenter.org)

**LATE**



April 11, 2024

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

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

*RE: GM608 & GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors, Agribusiness Development Corporation*

Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for GM608 and GM609 to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

HFHH is a program of Hawai'i Good Food Alliance (501 c3) dedicated to supporting local food hubs and promoting the consumption of locally grown, culturally preferred foods. Food hubs are an important part of the local food system, helping to connect farmers and producers with consumers. Our collaboration was created in 2017 and currently encompasses 14 food hubs across the states supporting 1,337 farms that serve approximately 14,465 customers every year. The HFHH's efforts ensure that small- and medium-sized farms have access to the resources they need to thrive, as well as providing access to fresh, healthy, and culturally appropriate foods to local residents.

For 30 years, ADC has been supporting the transition of Hawaii's agricultural industry from plantation era farming to more diversified long-term agricultural use. The ADC currently manages over 20K acres of farm land on Oahu and Kauai, as well as agricultural water systems and facilities. These holdings make the ADC one of the most important government organizations influencing the future of Hawaii's farming sector.

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) plays a critical role in supporting and guiding the transformation of Hawaii's agriculture industry from its historical focus on sugar and pineapple to a more diverse array of crops, managing over 20,000 acres of farm land, agricultural water systems, and facilities to increase Hawaii's food security and strengthen the economic prospects of local farmers and ranchers.

Jesse Cooke would be a strong candidate for the ADC Board of Directors due to his extensive experience in finance, investments, agricultural project development, and fundraising, as well as his deep involvement and practical knowledge of Hawaii's agricultural industry over the past decade, which would enable him to actively contribute to the development and success of ADC's projects while ensuring cost efficiency and securing alternative funding sources.

I respectfully request your support of GM608 and GM609. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 808 383 5224 or [saleh@hawaiigoodfoodalliance.org](mailto:saleh@hawaiigoodfoodalliance.org).

Sincerely



Saleh Azizi Fardkhales, Ph.D.  
Director, Hawai'i Food Hub Hui  
Hawai'i Good Food Alliance



Hartung Brothers, Inc.  
P.O. Box 823  
Kekaha, HI. 96752  
Tel. 808-337-1408  
Fax. 808-337-1560

April 10, 2024

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair  
State of Hawaii Legislature  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: GM608 & GM609, Gubernatorial Nominee Jesse Cooke, Board of Directors,  
Agribusiness Development Corporation

Dear Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Hartung Brothers, and as a private citizen raised in Waimea, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support** of GM608 and GM609, to confirm Jesse Cooke to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

Our Company, Hartung Brothers Hawaii, is a current long-term lessee and active farmer of the ADC agricultural lands in West Kaua'i. As such we have a significant interest in ensuring ADC is successful, which requires a strong board to help the organization navigate through the numerous issues it must address if it is to successfully carry out its mission.

Jesse Cooke's expertise in investment, finance, grant fundraising, and effective problem solving paired with extensive experience and familiarity with agriculture in Hawaii is a combination that makes him uniquely suitable to provide guidance to and improve the governance of ADC as a member of its board.

We humbly request your support for GM608 and GM609, and would like to thank you once again for this opportunity to testify in support.

Sincerely,

Joshua Uyehara  
Vice President – General Manager, Hawaii Operations