

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
**AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
HUI HO'OULU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
TOURISM

February 27, 2025

1:00 p.m.

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

**GM 587 - Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of  
Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation, Gubernatorial  
Nominee, DEAN OKIMOTO, for a term to expire 06-30-2028**

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

I am writing to express my **support of** GM 587, relating to the consideration and confirmation of Mr. Dean Okimoto's appointment to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC). With his decades of experience in Hawaii's agricultural industry, his advocacy for local farmers, and his commitment to strengthening food security, Mr. Okimoto is an ideal candidate to serve on the board and guide the future of Hawaii's agribusiness sector.

**Proven Leadership & Agricultural Expertise**

Mr. Okimoto is widely recognized as one of Hawaii's leading voices in agriculture. As the founder and former owner of Nalo Farms, he has over four decades of hands-on farming experience, pioneering innovative farming

practices and direct market relationships with local chefs, grocery stores, and community organizations. His expertise in sustainable agriculture, business development, and agritourism makes him exceptionally qualified to contribute to ADC's mission of revitalizing and expanding Hawaii's agricultural industry.

### **Commitment to Supporting Local Farmers & Food Security**

Throughout his career, Mr. Okimoto has been a steadfast advocate for Hawaii's small and mid-sized farmers. His leadership has helped bridge the gap between farmers, policymakers, and consumers, ensuring that agricultural policies align with the realities of farming in Hawaii. He has been instrumental in:

- Expanding local food production to reduce reliance on imports.
- Advocating for improved agricultural infrastructure and water access.
- Supporting beginner farmers through mentorship and business development programs.

His appointment would bring invaluable first-hand insight to ADC's efforts to increase agricultural self-sufficiency and enhance Hawaii's economic resilience through diversified farming initiatives.

### **Strong Track Record in Public and Private Sector Collaboration**

Beyond his work in farming, Mr. Okimoto has served in leadership roles on multiple agricultural and community boards, including:

- Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation (Former President)
- Hawaii Agricultural Foundation (Board Member)

- University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) Advisory Council

His ability to collaborate with government agencies, farmers, business leaders, and non-profits positions him as an effective and balanced decision-maker for ADC.

### **Conclusion**

Mr. Okimoto's deep-rooted knowledge of Hawaii's agricultural landscape, his advocacy for farmers, and his ability to develop public-private partnerships make him an outstanding candidate for the ADC Board of Directors. His leadership will undoubtedly enhance ADC's capacity to develop and implement strategic agricultural initiatives that support economic growth, food security, and sustainability.

I support the committee in confirming Dean Okimoto's appointment and look forward to seeing his contributions benefit Hawaii's agricultural future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**  
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI  
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
DIRECTOR

**DANE K. WICKER**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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Testimony of  
**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
**Director**  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

Thursday, February 27, 2025  
1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of  
**GM 587**  
**Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Directors of the**  
**Agribusiness Development Corporation, Gubernatorial Nominee,**  
**DEAN OKIMOTO, for a term to expire 06-30-2028.**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and members of the Committee.

I support the confirmation of Mr. Dean Okimoto to the Board of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

Dean has been a longtime advocate for locally grown products, the agricultural industry and its opportunities and challenges. With his professional background at Nalo Farms, Hawai'i Agricultural Foundation and the Hawai'i Seafood Council, Dean has experience with product branding and marketing and creating a culture between farmers and restaurants. In addition, he served as President at the Hawai'i Farm Bureau Federation and was instrumental with the beginning of the local farmers markets and has also held board positions with the Board of Water Supply, Pacific Century Fellows and Leeward Community College Culinary Program.

With his extensive background in agribusiness development, innovation, technology and marketing, Dean has been working to ensure that the younger generations are educated about agriculture and the future pipeline for farmers is set up for success.

Testimony of James Kunane Tokioka  
GM 587  
February 27, 2025  
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He has been recognized with numerous awards including the Industry Leadership Award of Excellence from Honolulu Magazine, Ka Lei Hano Heritage Award from the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources and the Local Champion Award from the Hawai'i Restaurant Association Hall of Fame.

Mr. Okimoto is an asset to the Agribusiness Development Corporation and the state of Hawai'i and I respectfully request your support for his confirmation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support.



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February 27, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

**TESTIMONY ON GM 587**

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

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice-Chair Wakai, 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 the confirmation of Dean Okimoto to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.**

Dean Okimoto has been a steadfast advocate for Hawai'i agriculture for decades. He served as the president of HFB for 11 years and led initiatives that have transformed the agricultural landscape in the state. Under his leadership, HFB successfully launched farmers markets, including the renowned Kapi'olani Community College Farmers Market, which created vital direct-to-consumer opportunities for farmers. His dedication to promoting local agriculture has been instrumental in fostering relationships between farmers and chefs, building a culture of supporting fresh, local products in Hawai'i's culinary industry.

As the founder and owner of 'Nalo Farms, Dean demonstrated an innovative approach to agriculture, introducing hydroponic systems and pioneering the local farm-to-table movement. His farm serviced over 100 restaurants, hotels, and markets, proving that local agriculture can thrive with strategic marketing and strong industry partnerships.

Beyond his business accomplishments, Dean has been deeply involved in shaping agricultural policy and advocacy. He played a pivotal role in the passage of the Important Agricultural Lands (IAL) law, which helps protect and preserve vital farmland for future generations. His leadership with the Hawai'i Agricultural Foundation and numerous

advisory boards has further cemented his commitment to strengthening Hawai'i's agricultural industry.

Dean's extensive experience, vision, and leadership make him an invaluable addition to the ADC Board. His deep understanding of agricultural business, infrastructure needs, and market development will help guide policies that support Hawai'i's farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses. His ability to navigate complex agricultural challenges while advocating practical, farmer-focused solutions is precisely what the ADC needs to succeed in its mission.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau strongly urges the committee to confirm Dean Okimoto to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



# HAWAII CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

GM 587 – In Support

Confirming Dean Okimoto to the Agribusiness Development Corporation Board

Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

Date: Thursday, February 27, 2025

Time: 1:00 PM

Place: Conference Room 229

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

The Hawaii Crop Improvement Association (HCIA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of GM 587**, which submits for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC), Gubernatorial Nominee, Dean Okimoto, for a term to expire 06-30-2028.

Mr. Okimoto's extensive knowledge and background in agriculture will make him an asset to the ADC Board of Directors and we urge you to please confirm his nomination.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

*The Hawaii Crop Improvement Association is a Hawaii-based non-profit organization that promotes modern agriculture to help farmers and communities succeed. Through education, collaboration, and advocacy, we work to ensure a safe and sustainable food supply, support responsible farming practices, and build a healthy economy.*



**GM-587**

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:54:02 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/27/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ronald Weidenbach	Testifying for Hawaii Fish Company Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Dean Okimoto's nomination to the ADC Board. I have known Dean for many years/decades as a skilled Waimanalo leafy greens producer, a proven expert in the marketing of local produce, and past-President of the Hawaii Farm Bureau. He would be a very knowledgeable addition to the Board.

**GM-587**

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 8:07:53 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/27/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Takemoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Decoite and members of the committee,

My name is Alan Takemoto. I am in strong support of the nomination of Dean Okimoto to the State Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

I've known Dean for many years both professionally and personally. Dean has extensive knowledge and expertise in the ag industry. He was the former owner/farmer of Nalo Farms, former President of the Hawaii Farm Bureau, current President of the Hawaii Ag Foundation and served on many other ag related tasks forces and committees.

Dean Okimoto brings a wealth of experience and passion for the expansion and development of farming in Hawaii. He will be a valuable member of ADC.

I respectfully urge your approval and support of Dean Okimoto's nomination to ADC.

Mahalo,

Alan Takemoto