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TO: Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: March 28, 2025

TIME: 10:02am

RE: HB454 HD2 Relating to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

Many of our member businesses have utilized HTDC programs to do things like increase manufacturing capacity, upgrade equipment, increase efficiency, and become technologically enabled. As this measure states HTDC can be a facilitative catalyst for innovation in the State.

We support this measure to promote economic recovery and diversification. We encourage the committee to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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March 28, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

**TESTIMONY ON HB 454, HD2**  
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference  
10:02 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

**The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 454, HD2**, which establishes a public policy framework that addresses state goals related to economic diversification and appropriates funds to the Hawai'i Technology and Development Corporation to implement specific programs that meet these goals.

As expenses rise, increasing revenues and profits are critical to the continued viability of farms and ranches. Farmers can do this by "adding value" to raw agricultural crops. Currently, off-grade and excess production is sometimes wasted due to market conditions. Converting them into value-added products will increase farm revenue and provide new business opportunities, increase employment opportunities, and address Hawai'i's goals of increased self-sufficiency and sustainability.

High production costs are a major driver of narrow profit margins for Hawai'i's farmers and value-added food producers. Labor, taxes, lease rents, transportation, utilities, and supplies are all business costs that often result in value-added food producers just breaking even.

Hawai'i is potentially losing millions of dollars because of the cost of processing agricultural crops into value-added products. HFB supports any program that promotes the production of value-added products so that farmers can increase their income while allowing locally produced value-added goods to compete with imported products, strengthening our local economy.

The strength of Hawai'i's economy depends upon a diversity in commerce that is resilient to economic downturns and aggressive in creating new growth opportunities. Hawai'i Technology and Development Corporation's programs, such as its Manufacturing Assistance Program and Small Business Innovation Research Program, support this goal.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair**

**Friday, March 28, 2025, at 10:02AM  
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB454 HD2 Relating to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation**

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 454 House Draft 2 (HB454 HD2), which establishes state goals related to economic diversification. Appropriates funds to the Hawai'i Technology and Development Corporation to meet those goals. Requires the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation to submit annual reports over three years to the legislature.

HB454 HD2 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Small Business. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth, enhance workforce opportunities, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

There is a strong need to bolster business innovation and economic development in Hawaii through goal-oriented programs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), including the Hawaii Small Business Innovation Research Program, the Manufacturing Assistance Program, and Accelerator programs. This legislation focuses on four key targets for economic growth—digital economy, strengthened trade activities, climate change mitigation, and import replacement—to diversify Hawaii's economy and reduce reliance on external resources. By appropriating funds to programs such as small business innovation research, manufacturing assistance, and accelerator initiatives, the legislature seeks to build a knowledge-based economy that nurtures emerging sectors, reduces climate impact, and increases local self-sufficiency.

HTDC would use these appropriations to work alongside other state or county agencies to implement and measure the effectiveness of these goals, including producing annual reports over a three-year period. The Chamber supports this measure because it strengthens local businesses, encourages technological advancement, and positions Hawaii for long-term economic prosperity.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 454 House Draft 2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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#### OUR MISSION

To support and advance public policies that make Hawai'i affordable for all working families.

#### OUR VISION

Collaborative, sustainable, and evidence-based public policies that create a diverse and sustainable Hawai'i economy, an abundance of quality job opportunities, and a future where all working families living in Hawai'i can thrive.

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**Committee:**

**Senate Committee on Ways and Means**

**Bill Number:**

**HB 454 HD2, Relating to the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation**

**Hearing Date and Time: March 28, 2025 at 10:02am (Room 211)**

**Re:**

**Testimony of Holomua Collaborative in support**

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members:

We write in support of House Bill 454 HD2, Relating to the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC). The purposes of HB 454 HD2 are to establish state goals related to economic diversification fueled by innovation and technology, and to appropriate funds to HTDC to implement specific programs that address these goals.

Holomua supports initiatives that help keep all local working families in Hawai'i by addressing issues of affordability. We are especially interested in fostering cross-sector collaboration and supporting policies that are evidence-based.

In order for Hawai'i to be affordable for local working families, we must ensure our local business community (including entrepreneurs looking to start new businesses) is provided with the opportunities necessary to expand and succeed in an uncertain economy. Only 21% of respondents in a recent survey of 1500 local residents agree that "Hawai'i is a good place to do business." This statement also shows a high percentage of disagreement, with 43 percent *disagreeing* that Hawai'i is a good place to do business.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, we must do better, and this bill is an important part of that.

Economic diversification is crucial for Hawai'i due to its reliance on a few industries, particularly tourism, which makes the state vulnerable to economic shocks. As of 2022, tourism accounts for approximately 17.7% of Hawaii's gross domestic product.<sup>2</sup> This overdependence on a single sector exposes Hawai'i to risks such as global economic downturns, natural disasters, and pandemics, as seen during the COVID-19 crisis when tourism plummeted, causing economic contraction. Diversifying the economy across various sectors can help stabilize the state's revenue streams and create a more resilient economic framework.

This bill aims to establish a framework—and to finance that framework—to accelerate economic diversification by building upon HTDC core programs that have already proven successful in helping local businesses thrive.

Diversifying Hawaii's economy to include participation in the digital economy, strengthened trade activities, and an increase in activity to reduce and mitigate climate change could create new opportunities in both the domestic and international markets. By fostering growth in sectors like technology, agriculture, and clean energy,

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<sup>1</sup> 2024 Affordability Survey, Holomua Collective.

<sup>2</sup> *Tourism and Hawaii Economy*, DBEDT Research Division, July 2024.



Hawai'i can develop a more resilient and balanced economy that is less dependent on tourism.

We urge you to support HB 454 HD2.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Josh Wisch', is written over a light blue circular background.

Josh Wisch  
President & Executive Director