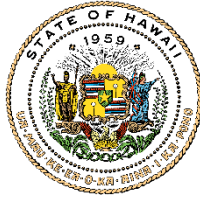


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Friday, January 31, 2025
10:00 AM

State Capitol, VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE, Conference Room 325

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 534
RELATING TO LABELING REQUIREMENTS

House Bill 534 proposes to prohibit the sale of raw ahi and raw ahi products in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill.**

Today's consumers are increasingly aware of the sourcing of their seafood, with many looking for insight into the quality, safety, and sustainability of products they purchase and consume. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) law (7 CFR Part 60) requires that seafood products be labeled with the country of origin. The COOL requirement does not apply to prepared foods offered for retail sale at food service establishments. This means that prepared products such as poke currently have no labeling requirement. This bill would extend country of origin labeling requirements for certain ahi tuna products at Hawai'i retail establishments, enabling consumers to make informed choices when purchasing seafood.

Yellowfin and bigeye tuna are highly migratory species that are managed at the international, national, and state levels. Internationally, fisheries targeting these species are managed by regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs), which set annual catch quotas for participating countries. Domestically, commercial landings of these species are closely monitored to ensure compliance with quotas established by RFMOs. The largest domestic fishery for ahi in the State, the Hawai'i longline fishery, is closely managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) through a limited entry permit system and strict regulations which include mandatory reporting, observer coverage, crew training, gear identification

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

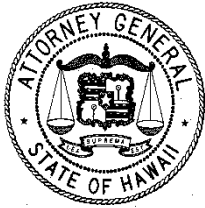
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

requirements, special area closures, and other measures to minimize impacts on bycatch and protected species. Fisheries that land tuna in other countries often lack this high level of management oversight.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 534, RELATING TO LABELING REQUIREMENTS.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

DATE: Friday, January 31, 2025

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 325

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or Travis T. Moon or
Christopher J.I. Leong, Deputy Attorneys General

Chair Kahaloa and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill proposes to amend section 486-120.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by adding a country-of-origin labeling requirement for raw ahi, including any raw ahi that has been combined, mixed, marinated, or otherwise prepared for human consumption.

The country-of-origin labeling requirement on page 2, lines 17-21, of the bill may be subject to challenge under the United States Constitution's Supremacy Clause, which provides that the laws of the United States are declared to be supreme to those of the individual states. See U.S. Const. art. VI, cl. 2.

The Federal Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended (7 U.S.C. § 1638, *et seq.*) (federal act), and its corresponding regulation, title 7 Code of Federal Regulations part 60 (federal regulation), require retailers to inform consumers of the country of origin of wild and farm raised fish.

The United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA), provides in the Federal Register (promulgating 7 C.F.R. part 60), that the language of the federal act "is clear" that Congress intended to preempt state law. See Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling of Beef, Pork, Lamb, Chicken, Goat Meat, Wild and Farm-Raised Fish and Shellfish, Perishable Agricultural Commodities, Peanuts, Pecans, Ginseng, and Macadamia Nuts, 74 FR 2658 at 2679, 2701 (January 15, 2009).

A state's country-of-origin labeling requirement that encompasses commodities governed by this federal regulation is preempted. See *id.* at 2701.

As stated above, the federal act and the corresponding federal regulation specifically regulate country-of-origin labeling of wild and farm raised fish offered for sale, and state law on this matter is preempted. See 7 C.F.R. § 60.200. However, country-of-origin labeling requirements for "processed food items," as defined in 7 C.F.R. § 60.119, are allowed. See 7 C.F.R. §§ 60.119 and 60.200(c). Thus, to avoid the Supremacy Clause issue, we recommend the following:

1. Deleting the word "raw" on page 2, line 4;
2. Replacing the word "raw" with "processed" on page 2, lines 16 and 18, of the bill;
3. Revising page 2, lines 19-20, as follows: "~~ahi[, including any raw ahi that has been combined, mixed, marinated, or otherwise prepared for human consumption,]~~ without..."
4. Adding a definition of "processed ahi" at page 3, line 8, as follows:
"'Processed ahi' means a retail item derived from ahi that has undergone specific processing resulting in a change in the character of the ahi, or that has been combined with at least one other substantive food component (e.g., breading, tomato sauce), except that the addition of a component (such as water, salt, or sugar) that enhances or represents a further step in the preparation of the product for consumption, would not in itself result in a processed food item."

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
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 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2025
10:00 a.m.
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

HOUSE BILL NO. 534
RELATING TO LABELING REQUIREMENTS

Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to this measure, which prohibits the sale of raw ahi products in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed. The Department of Agriculture offers comments.

Although we support and inspect uniform packaging and labeling and food labeling, we are not sure this is the correct department to best enforce this requirement. We have already inspected the identity of the product, the net quantity in terms of measure and any declaration of the packer or distributor of any package not packed on the premises where sold for consumer packaged goods. This is more of a consumer protection signage requirement and would need retail establishments to provide such signage to their customers for accurate information at point of sale. Other departments that inspect food safety and quality or consumer protection interests may be better suited to perform this task.

As mentioned on page 1 line 13 there appears to be a gap in federal country of origin labeling requirements for seafood, but may be superseded under the "COOL"



country of origin labeling USDA requirements. This bill may duplicate work already being done with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) program, 7 CFR Part 60. The Department would defer to have the regulations tightened under the federal program that exists before making the State and retailers take on the burden of the additional cost and labor associated.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony and comments.

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 5:47:22 AM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cynthia M Archibald	North Shore Nutrition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm a Nutrition Ecologist; meaning that I study nutrition and the intersection between human health, society, culture, the economy, and the environment

From an environmental health standpoint, ahi is overfished in certain locations. Choosing to avoid purchasing ahi from these locations could help to restore the ecological balance.

From a social equality perspective, the tuna fishing industry has long been involved in ethically questionable practices. In some cases, fishermen work in slave-like conditions with very little freedom and never see their families. Their passports are confiscated and they are held at sea for extended periods of time. Fishing boats recruit migrant workers from poor Pacific island countries with promises of wages to provide for their families, only to find themselves in slave-like conditions. While some employee protections and legal framework exist, enforcement is a major challenge. Fishing vessels spend most of their time in remote locations throughout the Pacific, where they are beyond the reach of national jurisdictions and can evade monitoring, inspection, and enforcement. This also limits recourse for employees who are unable to file complaints. There are risks for fishery observers as well. Numerous [cases](#) of unexplained disappearances have been documented. Across the Pacific, cases of human exploitation go largely undetected.

Hawaii's consumers deserve to know the origins of the food they purchase. For those consumers who oppose illegal, inhumane, or environmentally irresponsible practices within the fishing industry, they require this labeling in order to make an informed purchasing decision.

I appreciate your consideration of this testimony and am available to answer any questions.



January 29, 2025

Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Representative Kirstin Kahalo, Chair, Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

Date: January 31, 2025

Time: 10 am

Regarding: SB 129 Relating to Labeling Requirements

SUPPORT

HFACT is a not-for-profit, IRS 501c(5) organization, that advocates for small boat commercial, non-commercial, and recreational fishermen throughout Hawaii. HFACT board members sit on a number of federal fisheries management and endangered species advisory committees as well as state marine and coastal zone advisory committees; and HFACT is thoroughly familiar with and participates in ocean and marine resource management in Hawaii and the central Pacific.

There is an opportunity for us, in Hawaii to finally have knowledge of the Country of Origin regarding the ahi that we are buying and eating.

If you are wondering about why it is so important to have this information, the primary answer is the concern for your health. For example, every time we drop off ahi to the United Fishing Agency (auction block), we have to gill and gut the fish and the core temperature of the fish must be below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. This means that as soon as possible after landing the fish, we remove the gills and guts and ice/ brine the fish to get it chilled. This is an imperative practice to insure freshness and prevent bacteria from growing. In contrast to this meticulous handling of the ahi, it is not the same protocol practiced in other countries.

If you have ever seen the small writing on the label below the ahi poke in the market that says " Previously Frozen and Gassed", this means that the tuna you are about to purchase and eat is not fresh caught and has been treated with Carbon Monoxide. Carbon Monoxide will keep that tuna a nice red color, no matter how old it is. If you've ever seen tuna that is not fresh, it turns a grayish brown color and is a sure indication to not eat it. A little known fact about gassed tuna is that the USA is the only country that

Hawai'i Fishermen's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition, Inc.
2015 Leiloke Drive, Honolulu, HI.96822

allows this product to be sold. Even the countries that export this product to us, make it illegal to sell it.

Local caught fresh ahi is a valuable commodity and brings in revenues of over 110 million dollars into our economy. It is the most valuable food resource that the State produces and we need to treasure it and add to it's value by "Buying Local".

HFACT thanks the chair, vice-chair, and committee members for this opportunity to provide comment and to assist in providing food to the people of Hawaii and to assist in the conservation of Hawaii's natural resources.

Sincerely and Aloha,

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

Edwin Watamura
Executive Director.
watafishing @ gmail.com



January 29, 2025

Testimony in Support of HB534

Aloha Chair Kahaloe and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Longline Association (HLA) strongly supports HB534. HLA members are comprised of 150 active longline vessels operating out of Honolulu Harbor and the United Fishing Agency (Honolulu Fish Auction). The Hawaii longline fleet is the largest food producer in Hawaii, landing approximately 30 million pounds fish annually. The Hawaii longline fleet, which primarily targets ahi, is also Hawaii's largest fishery, comprising approximately 85% of the State's commercial marine landings. Approximately 80% of our fleet's landings stay in Hawaii with the remainder sold in US mainland markets.

HLA supports HB534 because it would extend existing country of origin labeling for raw ahi sold at retail establishment for products such as poke, sashimi, and sushi. Existing federal and state law already applies to seafood including fish fillets, tuna steaks, and loins as well as fruits, vegetables, and meat. Therefore, retailers already provide country of origin information for much of the seafood they sell so including that information for ahi poke and sashimi should not be onerous.

Ahi poke sold at retail establishments is dominated by previously frozen, carbon monoxide treated fish. However, there is a common misconception that this previously frozen, carbon monoxide treated tuna is derived from Hawaii fisheries, when in fact it is imported from foreign sources. A likely cause for some of this confusion is that retailers often use tricky advertising that mislead consumers into thinking the product is fresh or locally caught such as: "freshly made," and "locally prepared." Moreover, simply using the Hawaiian words "ahi poke" implies locally caught tuna. No ahi landed in Hawaii is being treated with carbon monoxide for commercial sale, whereas Hawaii landed tuna is typically only marketed as "fresh" without any origin information.

While the sale of carbon monoxide treated tuna is prohibited in Japan, European Union, and Australia, among other places, HB534 would not ban it from being sold in Hawaii. Rather, HB534 would provide consumers with more information on where the ahi in their poke comes from, thereby empowering consumers to make more informed choices.

By passing this bill, Hawaii would join Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi in states enacting enhanced seafood country of origin labeling laws to benefit consumers and local seafood producers from impacts of cheaper imports.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of HB534.

Mahalo,

Eric K. Kingma, Ph.D.
Executive Director

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 7:46:34 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Faun Skyles	Farm Link Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Hawai'i State Capitol

Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

I am re-submitting my testimony to reference the correct bill, **HB534**, rather than SB129.
Apologies for any confusion.

Farm Link Hawai'i, a local food hub based in Kalihi, O'ahu, strongly supports **HB534**, which aligns with our commitment to transparency and a resilient local food system. Requiring clear labeling of raw ahi's country of origin empowers consumers to make informed choices and ensures accountability in seafood sourcing.

Just as we uphold strict integrity standards for local products, this bill prevents misleading claims about "fresh" or "local" ahi. Strengthening transparency benefits Hawai'i's fishers, businesses, and communities. We urge you to support this measure.

Mahalo for your leadership and dedication to Hawai'i's food system.

Sincerely,

Faun A. Skyles
Culinary Director
Farm Link Hawai'i

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 12:43:07 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

As a proud supporter of Hawaii's fishing industry and a business dedicated to serving high-quality, locally sourced seafood, **Paradise Poke Hawaii fully supports transparency in labeling**. We believe customers have the right to know where their food comes from, and **labeling requirements should be clear, consistent, and accurately reflect the origins of raw ahi sold in Hawaii**.

Hawaii's fishing industry is a vital part of our local economy, and misleading labels that allow previously frozen, gas-treated, and imported ahi to be marketed as "fresh" or "local" create an unfair playing field. Consumers deserve **truth in labeling** so they can make informed choices, and our local fishermen deserve the recognition and support for their hard work in bringing fresh, high-quality ahi to our tables.a

At Paradise Poke Hawaii, we have always prioritized **sourcing locally whenever possible**, ensuring our customers enjoy the freshest ahi while directly supporting Hawaii's fishing industry. We welcome efforts that promote transparency, provided they are **fairly implemented across all retailers** and do not create loopholes that continue to mislead consumers.

We look forward to working alongside lawmakers, industry partners, and the community to ensure that **Hawaii's seafood industry thrives** and that customers can continue to trust in the integrity of the poke they enjoy.

Chancellor Kim

Owner, Paradise Poke Hawaii

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 2:03:20 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley Watts	Local I'a	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB534

Dear House Agriculture and Food Systems Committee,

My name is Ashley Watts and I am the owner/operator of Local I'a, Hawaii's only Community Supported Fishery (CSF) market. We purchase whole local fish directly from local troll-line fishers, butcher it, and distribute it to our local community through retail, subscription (CSF), and wholesale markets. Both I, my company, and all the fishers we work with are in favor of HB 534.

HB534 is a good start in tackling the problems associated with our local seafood system and moving us closer to food security for our islands. Within our local fisheries are both longline and troll line fishers; though these two groups do not produce the same volume of fish (higher among longline) nor the same quality of fish (higher among troll-caught), these two sides of our fishery have always been lumped together under "Hawaii landed". Although this needs to change in the future, we understand it will take time and an increased voice among our local fishers. Meanwhile, HB534 is a good beginning and begins to give our fishers that voice in what is served at our local eating establishments.

Poke cubes have flown under the radar for years, allowed to be branded with names such as 'Hawaiian Select' and other local-kine imagery to incentivize local business to buy them by misleading those businesses and their customers of the true origin of the fish. Labeling can be tricky and this has gone on for many years, and HB 534 is an important step in correcting this.

Furthermore, Seafood markets and local fishers are an important sector of the State's economy and food production (fish being the highest-grossing food item produced by our state), and the identification of foreign imported tuna is critical to inform and safeguard consumers and locally produced seafood. However, HB534's definition of retail establishment—"an establishment licensed under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act of 1930, which includes any retail establishment that purchases over \$230,000 of fresh or frozen produce per calendar year"—is too narrow. This labeling requirement only applies to large companies, even larger than mine (and we distribute to hundreds of customers weekly). Broadening the scope of HB534's regulation is something that is necessary in the future, but please support HB534 to start the ball rolling, get more transparency in our local seafood system, and get more economic support to our local fishers.

Mahalo

Ashley

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 3:41:20 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT this proposal.

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 3:53:01 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Theresa M Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 534 RELATING TO LABELING REQUIREMENTS.

Mahalo,

Theresa Thompson

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 5:56:07 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline S. Ambrose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

YES to - Prohibits the sale of raw ahi and raw ahi products in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 6:23:29 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Silva	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I am in support of this important bill . I believe it is necessary to label iitems.

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 7:28:26 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Faccenda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure such that consumers can know where the food they eat came from.

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 7:39:05 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Selena Vanapruks	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB534. This bill is important, and serves to protect local fishermen and Hawaiian agriculture as a whole. Many consumers are uneducated as to fresh ahi vs previously frozen ahi. I recently saw a tray of sashimi that said it was "processed and packed in Hawai'i" or "in USA". Many consumers are under the false impression that this means it is fresh and local to Hawai'i. A viral influencer, @photogami, even shared this brand of sashimi saying that it was "caught and prepared in Hawai'i." This is not true--anybody who has tried real fresh ahi can tell that the ahi from this brand has been previously frozen. The texture and flavor are not comparable to real fresh ahi, and the fact that people think they can get fresh local ahi sashimi from Costco for \$12/lb is a disservice to our local fishermen. Local ahi is a valuable commodity. It deserves to be sold at a higher price point, and it does not deserve undue competition from an inferior product labeled as "locally made" or "freshly made."

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 9:03:05 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Spencer vanderkamp	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a licensed commercial fisherman since I was 18 years old, born and raised here in Hawai'i, I am writing to strongly support SB129 and HB534, to put a stop do the deceptive practices taking place in many stores around Hawai'i.

The foreign, carbon monoxide treated poke from Foodland is so bad I cant even eat it without feeling sick. I wouldn't even consider eating poke from Safeway, and if the general public wasn't misled by false advertising, I doubt they would either.

These grocery stores use tricks like calling it locally made, fresh made or loopholes to knowingly deceive the public. Not only does allowing this to transpire support environmentally damaging methods of fishing in countries where labor laws are non-existent, it also damages the reputation of true local, Hawaiiin FRESH fish. The words fresh and local are losing their meaning because of selfish practices of these grocery giants.

This has major economic impact as well, hurting the Hawaiian fishing fleet by artificially lowering prices, forcing boat owners to cut cost, hire sojourners and ultimately take jobs away from local Hawai'i residents.

This is a bad practice, and should have been stopped years ago. Don't overcomplicate it, each piece of fish should be labeled for exactly when it was caught, and where it was CAUGHT, not "Landed" at the dock.

Thank you for your time.

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 10:02:06 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kenton Geer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support this bill. It's time the consumers of Hawaii know exactly what they are being served.

Over the past twenty years as a commercial fisherman here in Hawaii I've watched the local fleet grow ever smaller and the average age of the participants grow older.

The primary reason for this has been a flood of imports taking away the local markets. I can't even tell you how many times we haven't been able to work over the past decade because of the influx of cheaper product available in the marketplace. Time and time again we've been told not to go fishing because of the amounts of import around.

I can't even begin to say how many times I've gotten as little as ten cents a pound at the auction for my local caught ahi. The reason, the imports.

Mislabeled imports don't only cheat the consumer they also cheat the local fisherman.

The issue is that as the laws currently stand the consumer isn't given true transparency as to what they are consuming.

When paying for an expensive "locally made" poke bowl at Waikiki Beach the purchaser of that product is thinking the fish was caught locally and not landed in Indonesia fourteen months ago.

The current labeling practices are purposely dishonest and the equivalent to fraud in my opinion.

When I go to Maine I don't question if I'm eating a Maine lobster.

When I go to Maryland I don't question if I'm eating a Maryland Crab.

That's the same as when someone comes to Hawaii and purchases Ahi. They think they are getting a Hawaiian caught ahi.

We need to protect the name, the quality and reputation of our product as other states have done.

I believe a vote for anything other than supporting this bill is another shove closer to killing our small boat fishing fleet that is barely hanging in there as it is.

I ask you to pass this bill not only for consumers of Hawaii, but also to keep a traditional Hawaiian industry afloat.

Thank you from the past, present and future fishermen of Hawaii. Sincerely Kenton Geer

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 8:11:52 AM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William K. Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support Bill HB 534. Labeling should also include "Wild Caught" or "Farmed"

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 3:32:06 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Labeling of seafood origin is important both to protect consumers, and to protect our local fisheries. I support HB534.

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 5:46:54 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Evans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Kirstin Kahaloa and the House Agriculture and Food Systems Committee,

My name is Andrew Evans. I'm born, raised, live, and work on the windward side of O'ahu and am a conservation professional and volunteer at a small fishmonger business where we advocate for (and sell) island-local, sustainable, fair trade fish. I am interested in how we can adjust our local seafood economy to support local businesses, local fishermen, and keep our money on island and keep it dependent on our healthy natural resources. HB534 is an essential step to promote our local economy and our local profitable natural resources, while also offering consumers essential transparency in the beloved products central to our islands' identity. However, the text is lacking in its impact on local fisheries and its impact for customers at all retail venues. Therefore I urge you to support HB534 while considering some revisions.

Although Hawaii-landed ahi is brought to dock on island, that does not mean that the fish is either caught in domestic (let alone Hawaiian) waters nor with a domestic crew compliant with American labor laws. In contrast, local dayboat fishermen with local crews provide truly local fish, yet they are not distinguished by the bill's current text defining "ahi landed in Hawaii's ports". Therefore the bill does not sufficiently support local fishermen nor locally-caught fish. What would improve the text of this bill would be to require labeling based *not* on the landing port of the fish, but rather the location of where the fish was *caught* (which is already documented in accordance with fishery reporting requirements). The current bill provides progress, yes, but there is more to consider.

Separately, the current text of HB534 only targets large retailers of prepared ahi ("any retail establishment that purchases over \$230,000" worth of fish). It is important to regulate large retailers, as larger chain grocery stores do serve our community the highest volume of ahi. However, if the bill is to accurately address its value of consumer transparency and consumer choice, the text should also regulate small retail establishments. Small businesses (poke shops, food trucks, pop-ups, etc.) particularly cultivate and profit off of the consumer assumption that their business, product, and food is local, locally made, and (likely, but who knows) locally sourced. Competing similarly-sized businesses to the one I volunteer for (where we voluntarily source all our product from local fishermen and local island waters in an attempt to promote our local economy) have an unfair advantage by being exempt to this legislation; the current text allows them to continue to mislead their customers.

Ultimately I do hope you support the effort to strengthen labeling requirements in our local seafood economy, as these are important steps in prioritizing our local businesses, our local products, our local producers, our local natural resources, and our local customers. However, to sufficiently achieve the bill's intended goal to support local fish and local consumer choice, edits should be made.

Thank you for your time and consideration with HB534,

Andrew Evans

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 7:56:00 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joshua DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives,

I support this bill but would suggest adding language that would also prohibit imported tuna to be labeled as ahi. Ahi is a Hawaiian word that refers to yellowfin and bigeye tuna and has inherent value due to the quality and freshness associated with those fish caught in Hawaii.

The legislature should consider protecting what makes Hawaii special just like France does with champagne and Japan does with Wagyu beef. Fishing and fish, particularly ahi, mahimahi, opakapaka, etc. are part of the Hawaii identity, the brand, that draws people to our islands. Allowing lower quality fish to co-opt Hawaiian names taints our brand and gives us a bad name and worse appropriates our host culture for monetary gain.

Please vote yes on this bill and encourage your fellow representatives to pass it through the next two committees. Also please consider adding protections for the names of our fish to protect our culture and value of our resources.

Mahalo

Joshua DeMello

Kaneohe, O'ahu

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 9:53:40 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems,

I am writing in support of HB 534 Relating to Labeling Requirements. Clear labeling of raw ahi's country of origin empowers Hawai'i consumers to make informed decisions while supporting our local fishing industry. By promoting integrity in sourcing local products, this bill guarantees accountability in seafood labeling, preventing misleading claims about ahi being "fresh" or "local." Strengthening transparency ultimately benefits consumers, local fishers, and businesses.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Molly Mamaril

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 9:54:13 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ke'ala Pavao Tittle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ,

I support bill HB534. The quality of our food is a disgrace. When I purchase seafood I read the label's to make an informed decision whether to purchase or not. I don't buy farm raised salmon or shrimp because of the chemicals that are used to farm those products. I think it is a deceptive practice to sell fish (ahi) that has been gased with carbon monoxide to trick the uninformed buyer in to thinking the color is natural . As a consumer of fish ,I want to know where my fish is being caught, I support local Hawai'i fisherman because I know first hand the Hawai'i commercial fishing industry is closely monitored by NOAA. So therefore the integrity of the Hawai'i fishing industry is held to a higher standard then the foreign fishing industry. I want the fish to be labeled with the origin of the country they were caught in and if it was gased. I encourage you to pass bill HB 534 in the best interest of the health of the people that elected you to be their voice. Your decision will also effect the health of our future generation.

mahalo...Ke'ala Pavao Tittle....Kaua'i

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 9:41:55 AM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Craig Severance	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill, I'm a licensed part time commercial fisherman and voluntary social science advisor to state and federal management bodies. Carbon monoxide treated Ahi loins aka "tailpipe tuna" and especially the newest promotional form "vitamin tuna" carry documented health risks, and lack the federal temperature tracking required of our own Hawaii Ahi fishermen. While retailers will oppose this bill, the use of "Imported, previously frozen" Ahi that is the common basis of "poke bowls" creates a health risk and a risk to our economy. Our local small boat and longline Ahi fishermen are severely undercut in pricing by the unsafe import of this product, and are a very important part of our food security. Please move this forward. Mahalo

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 1:21:13 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lacie	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I support labeling it. Frozen ahi not from Hawai'i should be labeled as such.

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 1:25:38 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nelson	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Foreign imported frozen gassed ahi is terrible. Label it!

HB-534

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 1:27:44 PM

Testimony for AGR on 1/31/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rynetta K	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I strongly support. We should have truthful labeling of our poke.