

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

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
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**SHARON HURD**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**DEAN M. MATSUKAWA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

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

**FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2025  
1:00 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 782, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill No. 782, House Draft 1 that establishes within the Department of Agriculture (Department) a twelve-member Working Group to be chaired by the Chair of the Board of Agriculture to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture. There is an appropriation and a report is due to the 2026 Legislature. The Department offers comments.

The measure identifies the following three issues that shall be considered for amending or repeal by the Working Group:

- (1) Restrictions on leases of State agricultural land that prohibit a residence on the property;
- (2) Restrictions on leases of State agricultural land that prohibit the raising of poultry and swine on the property; and
- (3) Caps on agricultural operation loan rates.

Other laws "pertaining to agriculture" that are possibly "unnecessary or obsolete" may be considered for review and recommendation by the Working Group.

The Department has concerns with respect to the initial issues to be considered by the Task Force. Both the Agricultural Resources Management and Agricultural Loan divisions do not concur that the issues of the operating loan cap, house building and raising of poultry and swine are unnecessary, obsolete or impede the growth and success of agriculture in Hawaii.



In lieu of the proposed Working Group, the Department recommends that the Legislature commission a study to be done by a neutral party such as the Legislative Reference Bureau to comprehensively and efficiently determine the magnitude and extent of laws that qualify as unnecessary or obsolete and meriting consideration for amendment or repeal.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony.



# **Hawaii Agriculture Research Center**

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## **TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT**

### **House Bill HB 782, HD 1**

### **RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

**Friday March 14, 2025**

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

My name is Robbie Melton. I am Executive Director of the Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (HARC). I am testifying today on behalf of the center and our research and support staff.

### **HARC strongly supports House Bill 782, HD 1 Relating to Agriculture**

HARC is a non-profit organization whose mission is to support agriculture in Hawaii through research, infrastructure preservation and workforce training. HARC was established in 1895 as the Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association dedicated to supporting the sugar industry through applied research.

In 1996 HSPA became Hawaii Agriculture Research Center, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization with two experiment stations in Kunia and Maunawili. HARC's research and education encompasses forestry, coffee, cacao, forages, vegetable crops, tropical fruits, and other diversified crops. HARC transfers its research discoveries and best practices to Hawaii's producers throughout the islands to promote economic vitality through agriculture. We work with many agriculture businesses throughout the state.

HARC has been able to adapt to the changing agriculture industry, however, state laws have been slow to change and help farmers who work hard and face many challenges in producing food that nourishes Hawaii. I am grateful that this bill supports a working committee to review and make recommendations to amend or repeal unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Hawaii's agricultural needs.



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March 14, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**TESTIMONY ON HB 782, HD1**  
**RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, 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 782, HD1**, which establishes a working group within the Department of Agriculture (DOA) to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture. This bill also appropriates funds to support the working group's efforts.

Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers face significant regulatory challenges that can hinder agricultural growth and innovation. Many existing agricultural laws and regulations were established decades ago and may no longer align with the needs of modern farming practices, advancements in technology, and the state's goal of increasing local food production. Conducting a thorough review of these laws will help identify outdated policies, streamline regulatory processes, and reduce unnecessary burdens on farmers and ranchers.

A dedicated working group will provide an opportunity for agricultural stakeholders, policymakers, and regulatory agencies to collaborate in identifying and addressing policies that may be hindering the growth of local agriculture. This effort will help ensure that Hawai'i's agricultural laws and policies are relevant, effective, and supportive of a resilient and sustainable food system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

**HB782 HD1**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Friday, March 14, 2025, 1:00PM  
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

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

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council supports **HB782 HD1** which Establishes within the Department of Agriculture a working group to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture. and appropriates funds.

Agriculture continues to evolve and a comprehensive review of the current laws will be beneficial to the industry. This review should take into account the goals to increase local food production and remove undue burdens while still ensuring safe production for people and the land. A dedicated working group will be able to think critically about the needs of agriculture and how that relates to current laws and regulations. It is important that funds be provided, as noted in this measure, so that a thorough review can be done. We appreciate the inclusion of a representative of the Hawaii Cattlemen's Council on this working group so that we can directly speak to the livestock production needs.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure. 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





March 11, 2025

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert M. “Tim” Richards, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

**Support of HB 782, H.D. 1 Relating to Agriculture (Establishes within the Department of Agriculture [DOA] a working group to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000.)**

**AEN Hearing: Friday, March 14, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.**  
**Conference Room 224 & Videoconference**

The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawaii (LURF) is a private, non-profit research and trade association whose members include major Hawaii landowners, developers, and utility companies. LURF’s mission is to advocate for reasonable, rational, and equitable land use planning, legislation and regulations that encourage well-planned economic growth and development, while safeguarding Hawaii’s significant natural and cultural resources, and public health and safety.

LURF appreciates the opportunity to express its **support of HB 782, H.D. 1** and of the various agricultural stakeholder groups who defend the goals of viable agricultural operations and the conservation and protection of agriculture, including important agricultural lands in Hawaii.

**HB 782, H.D. 1.** The purpose of this measure is to establish a working group within the DOA to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture.

**LURF’s Position.** In view of the intensifying impacts being cast upon agricultural conditions and operations by climate change, globalization, the influx of devastating invasive species and diseases, market conditions, lack of available labor, amongst other factors, the State must seek to update and amend its current laws and policies to effectively accommodate, support, and modernize the local agricultural industry.

LURF understands that outdated, and therefore unnecessary and inappropriate sections of the Hawaii Revised Statutes and agriculture-related policies are now having the negative effect of impeding efficient operations and may be retarding the growth and success of agriculture in Hawaii.

LURF members include farmers, ranchers, and landowners who own, maintain, and engage in agricultural enterprises, all of which believe that existing agricultural laws and policies must be reviewed and vetted to help sustain their businesses, and significantly heighten local food production in this State.

Agricultural stakeholders believe the review by a working group as proposed by HB 782, H.D. 1 will greatly assist in the efforts to achieve long-term sustainability of Hawaii's food supply and economic growth, and to ensure the survival and success of this critical component of the State's economy.

The purpose of this bill is also consistent with the underlying intent and objectives of the IAL laws (Hawaii Revised Statutes, Sections 205-41 to 52), which were enacted to fulfill the mandate in Article XI, Section 3, of the Hawaii State Constitution, "to conserve and protect agricultural lands, promote diversified agriculture, increase agricultural self-sufficiency and assure the availability of agriculturally suitable lands."

By recognizing the significance of, and need to assist the local agriculture industry, and implement measures which help to support the growth and maintenance of agriculture in the State, this bill significantly helps to promote economically viable agriculture and food self-sufficiency in Hawaii.

For the reasons stated above, LURF is in **support of HB 782, H.D. 1**, and respectfully urges your favorable consideration of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding this matter.



#### Officers

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State President

Anabella Bruch  
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Ted Radovich  
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura  
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska  
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Environment Committee,

The Hawai'i 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. **HFU supports and seeks to amend HB782.**

HB782 HD1 takes an important step in modernizing agricultural laws by creating a working group within the Department of Agriculture to review and recommend changes to outdated or unnecessary regulations. This effort is critical to ensuring that Hawai'i's agricultural industry can thrive amid climate change, land use challenges, and market shifts.

The preamble acknowledges broad challenges affecting Hawaii's agricultural industry, including climate change, globalization, invasive species, market conditions, and labor shortages. However, the bill only mandates the review of three narrow issues: prohibitions on residential use of state agricultural leases, restrictions on poultry and swine farming, and caps on agricultural loan rates. While relevant, these focus areas fail to address the full range of policy barriers impacting agriculture in Hawaii.

Existing research underscores the need for a broader approach. The **Transforming Hawaii Food Systems Together** project identified nearly **300 food system-related policies**, spanning multiple agencies and levels of government. Furthermore, work related to **Act 189 (SLH 2022) compiled over 50 state and county policy items focused solely on soil classification and regulation**. If one component of agricultural governance requires review of this magnitude, the bill's current scope is clearly too limited.

The bill should ensure the working group is not artificially constrained in its review. While prioritizing certain policies can ensure progress, the scope must allow for additional laws to be considered as informed by stakeholder input and existing research. A phased approach could balance immediate action with a longer-term review of key regulatory challenges. By aligning the bill's scope with the scale of existing research, HB 782 can move beyond isolated fixes toward a more effective framework for modernizing Hawaii's agricultural policy.

To wit, we support the bill's intent but recommend **key amendments** to enhance its effectiveness. The proposed amendments will strengthen HB782 HD1 by **expanding the scope of review** to include critical issues like water access, procurement policies, and zoning laws that impact farmers. **Adding key agencies**—the Land Use Commission, Water Commission, and Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD)—will ensure that state land and water policies align with agricultural needs. **Allowing agricultural organizations to select their own designees** will provide fair and flexible representation. Additionally, **requiring public hearings** will improve transparency and farmer input, while **clarifying funding**



**allocation** will ensure that resources are used effectively to support stakeholder engagement and participation.

## **Proposed Amendments**

### **Prioritize an Initial Set of High-Impact Laws for Review**

Based on the [results of HDOA's Summer 2025 survey](#), top issues for producers statewide included: Invasive Species, Access to land, Labor cost, Equipment costs, Access to capital, and Water infrastructure. We recommend focusing on items among those issues that have clear regulatory oversight. Namely: land access, labor, capital, and water. Further, in support of state local procurement goals and processing facility investments, we recommend addressing local procurement as well.

#### **Amend Section 2(c) to specify an initial focus, while allowing expansion as needed:**

(c) The working group shall first prioritize a review of laws that directly impact agricultural viability and land use, including but not limited to:

1. Restrictions on leases of state agricultural land that prohibit a residence on the property.
2. Restrictions on leases of state agricultural land that prohibit the raising of poultry and swine on the property.
3. Caps on agricultural operation loan rates.
4. Regulations governing agricultural workforce development and farm labor access.
5. Water access and permitting.
6. Procurement policies that impact the use of locally grown food in state institutions.

(d) The working group may identify and recommend additional laws for future review in subsequent legislative sessions.

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### **Add Members from Related State Agencies**

The Land Use Commission, Water Commission, and Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) should be included to ensure state land and water policies align with agricultural needs.

#### **Revise Section 2(b) to add the following members:**

**New additions (after paragraph 4):**

- (\_) The chairperson of the Land Use Commission, or the chairperson's designee;"
- (\_) The chairperson of the Commission on Water Resource Management, or the chairperson's designee;
- (\_) The director of the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development, or the director's designee."

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### **Allow Agricultural Organizations to Select Their Own Designees**

Civil society groups in the working group (such as ourselves, Hawai'i Farm Bureau and Hawai'i Cattlemen's Council) are assigned specific individuals rather than being allowed to designate their own representative, unlike government agencies. All agricultural organizations should have the ability to select a designee.

#### **Revise Section 2(b), paragraphs (9)–(12) to allow flexibility in representation:**

(9) The executive director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau, or the executive director's designee, who shall be invited by the chairperson of the working group;

(10) The executive director of the Hawai'i Agriculture Research Center, or the executive director's designee, who shall be invited by the chairperson of the working group;

(11) The managing director of the Hawai'i Cattlemen's Council, or the managing director's designee, who shall be invited by the chairperson of the working group;

(12) The president of the Hawai'i Farmers Union United, or the president's designee, who shall be invited by the chairperson of the working group.

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### **Increase Transparency and Farmer Engagement**

Farmers who will be affected by policy changes should have a voice in the process. The bill should require at least two public hearings before finalizing recommendations.

#### **Revise Section 2 to add a new subsection:**

(h) The working group shall hold at least two public hearings before finalizing its recommendations. Public notice shall be provided in advance, and input from farmers and agricultural stakeholders shall be considered.

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### **Clarify Funding Allocation**

The bill includes an appropriation, but it does not specify how funds will be used. A portion of funding should be directed to facilitating farmer engagement and stakeholder input.

#### **Revise Section 3 to specify use of funds:**

A portion of the funds appropriated shall be used to facilitate stakeholder engagement and farmer participation in the working group's process, including public hearings

and outreach efforts.

These amendments will make the working group more **inclusive, effective, and aligned with Hawai'i's agricultural priorities**. We urge the committee to incorporate these changes to ensure that the bill truly supports Hawai'i's farmers and agricultural future.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union



March 13, 2025

To: Chair Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Subject: **HB782 HD1**, Relating to agriculture

Aloha, I am submitting this testimony in support of **HB782 HD1**. This bill establishes a working group in the Department of Agriculture whose purpose is to recommend repeals and amendments for outdated laws relating to agriculture.

This working group will give a particularly large amount of attention to laws that place restrictions on the following:

- **Leases of state agricultural land for providing residence on a property:**  
Farming is very difficult work that often requires early mornings and late nights. Being unable to live on their land forces farmers to commute, which raises costs, lowers productivity, and makes their lives more difficult in general.
- **Leases of state agricultural land for raising poultry and swine on a property:**  
Hawaii currently imports the vast majority of its food from the mainland, including meat and eggs. By making it more feasible to produce these commodities locally, consumers will have access to cheaper, healthier, more sustainable food.
- **The loan rates of agricultural operations:**  
While lower loan rates make loans cheaper for farmers, it has many unintended negative consequences. Caps on loans make banks more hesitant to give them out in the first place. Due to this, it is much harder for smaller farmers to qualify for them since large corporations are seen as a safer investment.

Some argue that the above restrictions do not have a large enough negative impact on local farmers to meaningfully hold them back. That if we wish to establish this working group, we should do further research to truly understand the effects of existing laws. I disagree with this argument. The fact of the matter is the political, economic, and literal climate has been transforming at blinding speeds in recent years. This means the conditions local farmers currently face are far different than those faced decades ago. In wake of this, local farmers have been vocal about the impacts of these existing laws and the need for change.

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**The Food+ Policy internship** develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2025, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



# HAWAI'I FOOD+ POLICY

Honolulu, HI 96813  
food@purplemaia.org

I empathize with being uncertain in the face of change. However in times of crisis, hesitation and rigidity only lead to eventual ruin. By passing HB782 HD1, you will create a team of capable individuals who can make the important changes needed to turn Hawai'i into a more resilient place.

Mahalo for your time and continued support of Hawai'i's food systems.

Mahalo,  
Lea Iaea & the Food+ Policy Team  
#fixourfoodsystem

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**HB-782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:50:10 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support HB 782 Which establishes within the Department of Agriculture a working group to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture. Appropriates funds.

Mahalo,

Theresa Thompson

**HB-782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 10:31:39 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randy Cabral	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

**HB-782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 10:34:23 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jimmy Gomes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill and stand with HFB testimony



**HB-782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 11:19:41 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John R. Gordines	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of the working group to come together and address our farmers and ranchers and their agricultural hurdles.

Johnny Gordines

**HB-782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 12:48:02 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
J Ashman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is an important step towards updating agricultural policy.