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February 7, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 782
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Kahaloe, Vice-Chair Kusch, 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, 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 Conducting a thorough review of these laws will help identify outdated policies, streamline regulatory processes, and reduce unnecessary burdens on farmers and ranchers.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.



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Aloha Chair Kahaloe, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems 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 HB782.**

By establishing a working group within the Department of Agriculture, the bill proposes a comprehensive review of existing laws to identify and either amend or repeal those that may be unnecessary or obsolete. The targeted approach recognizes the evolving nature of the agricultural sector, which faces new challenges and opportunities that outdated laws may no longer address effectively. This process should involve a ground-up regulatory review, meaning that each regulation is re-evaluated from scratch to determine its current relevance and necessity. While this method offers several merits—such as the opportunity to eliminate redundant mandates—it should be pursued judiciously. Notable concerns include the risk of regulatory gaps arising from sunset provisions, increased uncertainty for businesses due to frequent changes, and the possibility of inadvertently eliminating necessary regulations if they are not properly justified. Additionally, the process may favor quantifiable benefits at the expense of less tangible, yet important, societal gains, prove challenging in assessing long-term impacts, and potentially lead to regulatory confusion that complicates compliance.

Furthermore, the appropriation of funds to support this initiative underscores a commitment to a thorough and impactful process. A diverse working group will have the necessary resources to engage relevant stakeholders and develop informed recommendations.

In this context, the Hawaii Farmers Union respectfully requests inclusion in the working group established by this Act. Our participation will ensure that the practical insights and long-term experience of family farmers and agricultural producers are incorporated into the review process, ultimately helping to create a balanced legislative environment that supports both the sustainability and growth of Hawai'i's agricultural industry.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



February 6 2025

To: Chair Kirstin Kahaloe, Vice Chair Matthias Kusch, and the House Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Subject: **HB 782**, Relating to agriculture

Aloha, I am submitting this testimony in **support** of **HB 782**. 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.

As you know, the political, economic, and literal climate have been transforming at blinding speeds in recent years. Unfortunately, this has led many current laws relating to agriculture to become outdated, which hurts efforts to make the islands' food systems more resilient.

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:**
Hawai'i 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 small farmers to qualify for them since large corporations are seen as a safer investment.

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

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By passing SB1185, you will create a team of capable individuals who can make important changes to these laws that hinder the progress of the Hawaiian agricultural system.

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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February 5, 2025

Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

Support of HB 782 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.)

**Friday, February 7, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 325, Via 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** 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. 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 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**, and respectfully urges your favorable consideration of this bill.

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

HB-782

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:21:39 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/7/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
penny levin	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

While the intention of this bill is good, the makeup of the working group is business as usual. Legislators need to get with the times. Farming has changed as have farming practices for many; the use of organic and regenerative agricultural practices has increased exponentially, especially on small farms, in the last decade, and it is the small farms that will feed us locally. HARC does not represent the agriculture industry; they are a research entity and not a farm organization and therefore should have no standing in the review of agricultural laws and rules. I strongly disagree with their inclusion in this working group. What is missing is the voice of a majority of small farmers. The Hawaii Farmers Union United is noticeably absent from the working group list. They should hold a seat on the committee as it represents a far greater number of small farmers, and farmers in general across the islands, who are implementing regenerative agriculture systems than the Farm Bureau. Also missing is a seat for the Chair (or Executive Director) of the Water Commission. This seat is critical to ensure that any changes or elimination of rules or law do not undermine existing water law.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment.