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April 2, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

TESTIMONY ON SB 890, SD2, HD1
RELATING TO BUSINESS REGULATION

Conference Room 329 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Chun, 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 the intent of SB 890 SD2, HD1, which establishes labeling requirements for products labeled, marketed, or sold as "poi." This measure is consistent with efforts to protect the integrity of Hawaii-grown agricultural products, ensuring that consumers have clear and accurate information about the origins of the food they purchase.

Poi is a staple food in Hawai'i with deep cultural and agricultural significance. Made from taro, poi represents not only a traditional Hawaiian dietary staple but also a valuable agricultural crop that provides economic opportunities for local farmers. Similar to other premium Hawaii-grown products, such as coffee, macadamia nuts, and mamaki tea, ensuring transparent labeling for poi is essential to preventing misleading marketing practices and maintaining the reputation of locally produced agricultural goods.

This measure establishes clear distinctions for labeling poi products:

- If a product contains any ingredients sourced from outside the state, the label must indicate that it contains ingredients grown outside of Hawai'i and specify their origin.
- Products made with 100% imported taro should not be labeled in a way that implies they are made with Hawaii-grown ingredients.

While we believe that all 100% Hawaii-grown poi producers would want to label their products as such, we are unsure how practical it is to mandate this labeling. The primary

focus of this legislation should be on preventing misleading labeling rather than imposing a requirement on locally grown poi products, like coffee in HRS §486-120.6. We encourage further discussion on whether requiring a "100% Hawaii-grown" label is necessary or if the emphasis should remain on restricting deceptive labeling practices.

Additionally, we recommend that the bill allow sufficient time for poi producers to implement any new labeling requirements. Businesses will need to modify their packaging, and many may have already invested in packaging supplies based on current regulations. A reasonable transition period will ensure compliance without placing undue financial strain on local producers.

Hawai'i's agricultural producers already face significant challenges, including high production costs, limited land and water resources, and competition from cheaper imported goods. Clear and truthful labeling not only ensures consumer confidence but also supports local farmers by allowing them to differentiate their products in the market.

We urge the committee to pass SB 890, SD2, HD1, with amendments to ensure a fair and practical implementation of labeling requirements that protect the integrity of Hawaii-grown agricultural products while providing adequate time for compliance.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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State President

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Maureen Datta
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Kohala, Hawai'i

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Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
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Kilia Avelino-Purdy
Moloka'i

Negus Manna
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India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Chun, and Members of the House Consumer Protection & Commerce 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 SB890.**

SB890 addresses an important aspect of consumer transparency and supports local agriculture by requiring clear labeling of poi products. By mandating that products marketed or sold as "poi" include labels indicating whether they are made wholly from kalo grown in Hawaii or sourced from outside the state, consumers are empowered with the knowledge necessary to make informed purchasing decisions. This requirement not only fosters transparency but also enhances consumer trust in locally branded products.

Furthermore, this bill has significant implications for supporting local farmers and the agricultural economy of Hawaii. By distinguishing products made from local kalo, it encourages consumers to choose locally sourced poi, thereby providing a boost to local kalo growers and the associated agricultural infrastructure. The clear delineation between local and non-local sources encourages a preference for homegrown ingredients, promoting sustainability and the preservation of traditional Hawaiian farming practices. This legislative measure is a step toward bolstering the state's agricultural self-reliance and supporting the livelihoods of our farmers, who play a critical role in maintaining Hawaii's cultural and economic landscape.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 890 SD2 HD1
RELATING TO BUSINESS REGULATION**

House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Hawai'i State Capitol

April 2, 2025

2:00 PM

Room 329

Aloha e Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Chun and Members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB890 SD2 HD1**, which would impose labeling requirements making clear whether products labeled as “poi” are made with taro grown 100% in Hawai'i or with taro imports. This is a commonsense measure to protect local farmers, the integrity of indigenous food systems, and consumer choice.

Hawai'i's farmers face intense competition from out of state and foreign products due to the high cost of land and imported supplies here in the islands. As the most isolated land mass in the world, our local and indigenous ecosystems and food systems are also uniquely vulnerable to introduced pests; a legislative report submitted in 2010 found that kalo imports increase the risk of diseases that can decimate kalo harvests.¹ Both costs and disease are constant threats to local farmers and indigenous food systems. This bill would help address these threats by providing consumers with the information necessary to support local taro farmers, including Native Hawaiian farmers.

Moreover, focusing a labeling program on a Native Hawaiian food product aligns with long-standing efforts to revitalize Native Hawaiian agriculture. Taro farmers continue to struggle with limited land availability due to high lease costs and zoning restrictions that prioritize other forms of development over traditional farming practices. The Taro Security and Purity Task Force specifically recommended state-level action to support access to agricultural lands for Native Hawaiian farmers, incentivize traditional farming through subsidies and ensure that local produce remains at the center of Hawai'i's food system. This bill offers an opportunity to address those recommendations by creating

¹ *Taro Security and Purity Task Force Legislative Report 2010*, 14-15 (Dec. 29, 2009), https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/NRLC_REPORT_FINAL-web.pdf.

a labeling program that will benefit small-scale traditional farmers who rely exclusively on kalo grown on their own land.

The protections afforded to kalo and other farmers by this bill are like those already afforded to Hawai'i's coffee growers, and should not face any constitutional challenge. Additionally, protection of poi is particularly appropriate given the significance of poi as a cultural product, and the recent misappropriation of Native Hawaiian cultural food products for profit to the exclusion of Native Hawaiians (such as attempted patents on use of the term poke by continental businesses).

We urge the committees to **pass SB890 SD2 HD1**. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

SB-890-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 10:06:56 PM

Testimony for CPC on 4/2/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mahealani Cypher	Ko`olau Foundation	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Ko`olau Foundation offers its strong support for passage of this bill to protect the identity and integrity of island-produced poi products from imports that claim the name but not the natural enhancements of being grown in Hawaiian soil and water.

Our organization has long advocated for the preservation of Native Hawaiian cultural practices and traditions. Growing and production of kalo, among the most treasured food products desired by Hawaii's people, is a cultural practice and integral to the identity of the Hawaiian people as well as considered part of our `ohana, our island family.

We urge the preservation of that identity of poi, cultivated and produced in our islands' lo`i kalo, be protected from similar items imported from other places.

We ask your favorable consideration of this bill.

Mahalo for allowing us to offer our mana`o.

Mahealani Cypher



KO'OLAUPOKO HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUB

LATE

April 1, 2025

COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE

Rep. Scot Matayoshi, Chair
Rep. Cory Chun, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SB 890, SD2 HD1 Relating to Business Regulation

Aloha mai kakou,

The Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club (KPHCC) submits this testimony in support of SB890 SD2 HD1. KPHCC is a not-for-profit community organization established in 1937 by a group of kama'āina residents in the Ko'olaupoko area. Our membership exceeds 100 adult and 'ōpio members. KPHCC's primary mission is to perpetuate and cultivate Native Hawaiian culture and values, including lawai'a pono, mālama 'āina, 'āina momona, and aloha 'āina. KPHCC furthers its mission through advocacy, volunteerism, community engagement, and education.

SB890 SD2 supports our local kalo farmers and allows consumers to be able to identify locally grown/sourced products and make sustainable choices when making food purchases. Poi is universally understood to mean the traditional staple food of indigenous Hawaiians. SB890 protects consumers from intentionally misleading packaging that undermines the value of the work and investment of local kalo farmers.

The cultural connection between native Hawaiians and kalo, our staple crop, is foundational. It is a symbol of relationships, and a part of Hawaiian mythology and spirituality. This bill safeguards traditional knowledge, practices and cultural heritage by preventing the further commodification of our culture.

The Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club respectfully urges you to stand with Hawaii's kalo farmers in order to protect their worldwide reputation of growing authentic Hawaiian kalo to be made into authentic poi.

Me ke aloha 'āina,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Charles Na'umu Pelekikena".

Charles Na'umu Pelekikena (President)

The Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club was established in 1937 and is one of the largest in the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs nationwide. Ko'olaupoko HCC is a not-for-profit community organization dedicated to preserving and perpetuating the history, heritage and culture of Native Hawaiians and providing leadership and scholarships. Its membership is open to people of Hawaiian ancestry and those who are "Hawaiian at heart."