

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
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State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &
TECHNOLOGY**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2025
10:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 423 AND VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE BILL NO. 890, SD2, HD1
RELATING TO BUSINESS REGULATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure that requires any products labeled, marketed, or sold as "poi" to contain a label stating whether the poi product is made wholly from kalo grown in the State or from kalo sourced outside the State. The Department of Agriculture supports the intent of this bill and offers comments.

Currently, the Department of Agriculture does not have the ability to conduct inspection or enforcement in this area. If this measure should move forward into law and change HRS 486- to include Poi; labeling requirements, DOA respectfully asks for one FTE and that funds be added to this bill to support one Measurement Standards Inspector V SR-19 \$65,000, to support and restore enforcement capability for labeling regulations for Hawaii products such as coffee, macadamia nuts, mamaki tea, and poi labeling requirements. This inspector will inspect and enforce the new laws.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to this measure.





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March 19, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

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

Conference Room 423 & Videoconference
10:00 AM

Aloha Chair Ilagan, Vice-Chair Hussey, 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.



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 890_SD2
RELATING TO BUSINESS REGULATION**

House Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Hawai'i State Capitol

March 19, 2025

10:00 AM

Room 423

Dear Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the House Committee on
Economic Development and Technology:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB890_SD2**, 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 a labeling program that will benefit small-scale traditional farmers who rely exclusively on kalo grown on their own land.

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.

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**. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



Food+ Policy Internship 2025

food@purplemaia.org

3/17/25

Subject: SB 890, *Poi Origin Labeling*

Aloha Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology,

Hawaii Food+ Policy is in support of SB 890, which establishes clear labeling requirements for poi products based on the origin of the kalo used. This bill is essential for maintaining the integrity of Hawai'i's agricultural heritage, supporting local farmers, and ensuring transparency for consumers.

Poi is a culturally significant staple food in Hawai'i, deeply rooted in Kanaka 'Ōiwi tradition. Consumers deserve to know where the kalo in their poi is grown, especially as the "Hawai'i-grown" designation carries a distinct reputation for quality and authenticity. By requiring clear labeling, SB890 protects both local farmers and consumers from misleading marketing practices.

This bill benefits Hawai'i in several key ways:

- **Protecting Local Agriculture:** Ensuring that products labeled as "100% Hawaii-grown" truly originate from kalo grown in the State supports local farmers and strengthens our agricultural economy.
- **Consumer Transparency:** Providing clear information about the origin of kalo allows consumers to make informed purchasing decisions, fostering trust in the marketplace.
- **Preserving Cultural Identity:** Poi is more than just a food product—it is a cornerstone of Hawaiian culture. Proper labeling upholds the respect and integrity that poi and kalo deserve.

We urge the Legislature to pass SB890 to uphold transparency, protect local agriculture, and honor the cultural importance of kalo and poi in Hawai'i. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,
The Hawaii Food+ Policy Team

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 undergrads and graduate students from throughout the UH 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.



KO'OLAUPOKO HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUB

March 18, 2025

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Rep. Greggor Ilagan, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Hussey, 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. 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,

Charles Na'umu Pelekikena (President)

Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club

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."

SB-890-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 5:11:22 PM

Testimony for ECD on 3/19/2025 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of this Committee,

The Ko`olau Foundation strongly urges your support and passage of S.B. 890 out of committee.

Our organization advocates for the preservation of Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices, one of which is the farming and production of kalo - known to all of us as "poi". That is a word that is olelo Hawai`i, and directly expressive of a globally known as an Hawaiian product.

We are concerned about loss of the Hawaiian brand by improper use of the word, poi, that is NOT produced here in the Hawaiian islands, and urge all of you to pass this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration of our mana`o.

Mahealani Cypher

SB-890-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2025 11:19:52 AM

Testimony for ECD on 3/19/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is high time we protect Hawaii's agricultural products and make sure those from outside Hawaii nei do not take advantage of us. The coffee growers fought for years to get the point across that 10% Hawaii grown coffee should not be labeled Hawaii.

Please move this bill forward.

SB-890-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2025 3:17:16 PM

Testimony for ECD on 3/19/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kalo 100% grown and farmed in the State of Hawaii