

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 AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025
9:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325 AND VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE BILL NO. 890, SD2
RELATING TO BUSINESS REGULATION

Chair Kahaloe, Vice Chair Kusch, 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 ingredients grown in the State or from ingredients 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 capability of 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 on this measure.





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

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

March 12, 2025

9:00 AM

Room 325

Dear Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Committee on
Agriculture & Food Systems:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB890_SD2**, which would impose labeling requirements making clear whether products labeled as “poi” include ingredients grown outside of the State. 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 native and indigenous ecosystems and food systems are also uniquely vulnerable; a legislative report submitted in 2010 found that kalo imports increase the risk of introduced pests and disease that can decimate kalo harvests.¹ Both costs and disease are constant threats to our farmers and indigenous food systems. This bill would help address these threats by providing consumers with the information necessary to support local farmers and locally grown poi ingredients (primarily taro but also other Polynesian staples like 'ulu).

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.

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.



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March 12, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON SB 890, SD2
RELATING TO BUSINESS REGULATION

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:00 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 the intent of SB 890 SD2, 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, 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.

SB-890-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 12:27:55 PM

Testimony for AGR on 3/12/2025 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure.

SB-890-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:21:54 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/12/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dylan P. Armstrong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure without elaboration, for none is needed.

SB-890-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:10:26 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/12/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems,

I am testifying in support of SB890.

Poi, traditionally a major staple food for our people, was made 100% of Hawaii grown ingredients (most commonly, kalo). The use of the term “Poi” for a product not made of 100% Hawaii grown ingredients would be misleading. Thus I agree with this bill.

I appreciate the amending of the bill to ingredients instead of specifically just kalo, as it allows for products termed “Ulu Poi” or “Uala Poi” to refer to products made with wholly derived locally grown ulu - breadfruit (for “Ulu Poi”), and wholly derived locally grown ‘uala - sweet potato (for “Uala Poi”). These were less common, but traditional dishes, that if sourced with other products, would also be misleading.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Keoni Shizuma, Kāne‘ohe, O‘ahu

SB-890-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:15:16 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/12/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jonathan K Kukea-Shultz	Kakoo Oiwi	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for Senate Bill 890, SD2 Relating to Business Regulation

Ensuring Authenticity and Local Agriculture

I write in support of Senate Bill 890, SD1 Relating to Business Regulation, which seeks to prohibit the sale, offer for sale, display, or marketing for sale of any product labeled as poi; unless the product is wholly derived from taro (kalo) that is grown within the state of Hawaii.

This bill is more than just a regulatory measure; it is a no-brainer statement in favor of preserving Hawaii's cultural heritage, supporting our local agriculture, and ensuring the genuineness of one of our most traditional foods. Poi, made from kalo, holds a sacred place in Hawaiian culture, not only as a staple food but also as a symbol of life, obligation, lineage, and identity. Allowing products that do not meet these standards to be marketed as poi; dilutes its cultural significance and misleads consumers.

Supporting Senate Bill 890, SD1 ensures that the term poi; is reserved for products that genuinely hold our values, practices and agricultural methods of our state. This measure would also provide critical support to our local farmers who cultivate kalo, often through labor-intensive processes that sustain our economy and environmental stewardship.

This bill recognizes the importance of transparency and honesty in product labeling, giving our consumers confidence in the origins and authenticity of the poi they purchase. They will know that there is no out of state or foreign taro in our poi it is 100% grown in Hawaii.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 890, SD1 is a necessary step in protecting the integrity of our poi, our agricultural heritage and economic wellbeing of Hawaii. I urge the legislature to pass this bill and preserve our heritage and native food source for our future generations.

Aloha,

Kanekoa Kukea-Shultz



KO'OLAUPOKO HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUB

March 11, 2025

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair
and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SB 890, SD2 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-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 4:42:20 PM

Testimony for AGR on 3/12/2025 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members:

The Ko`olau Foundation strongly supports passage of SB890, SD2, which restricts the commercial use of the word "poi" in marketing such products if it is not grown here in Hawaii.

Our organization works to preserve and perpetuate Hawaiian cultural values and traditions, among which is `olelo Hawai`i. Use of the Hawaiian word to describe or market a product that is NOT from Hawai`i is not appropriate and a deceptive sales practice.

We urge you to report this bill out of committee.

Mahalo for your consideration of our mana`o.