

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2025
2:00 p.m.
CONFERENCE ROOM 308 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 534, HD2
RELATING TO LABELING REQUIREMENTS**

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 534, HD2. This bill prohibits the sale of any processed food item with raw ahi product as an ingredient in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed. The Department of Agriculture offers comments.

Although we support and inspect uniform packaging and labeling and food labeling, we are not sure this is the correct department to best enforce this requirement. We have already inspected the identity of the product, the net quantity in terms of measure and any declaration of the packer or distributor of any package not packed on the premises where sold for consumer packaged goods. This bill designates signage requirements and would need retail establishments to provide such signage to their customers for accurate information at point of sale regarding processed ahi and yellowfin products like poke and sushi. Other departments that inspect food safety and quality or consumer protection interests may be better suited to perform this task. We suggest considering DCCA or DOH as the department to inspect and enforce this bill. Measurement Standards and HRS Chapter 486 does not currently have inspection or



enforcement of raw or processed fish products. We inspect and enforce packaged products labeling such as coffee, macadamia nuts and petroleum gas meters, scales and taximeters for accuracy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
FINANCE

Thursday, February 20, 2025
2:00 PM

State Capitol, VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE, Conference Room 308

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 534, HOUSE DRAFT 2
RELATING TO LABELING REQUIREMENTS

House Bill 534, House Draft 2, proposes to prohibit the sale of any processed food item with raw ahi product as an ingredient in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill.**

Today's consumers are increasingly aware of the sourcing of their seafood, with many looking for insight into the quality, safety, and sustainability of products they purchase and consume. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) law (7 CFR Part 60) requires that seafood products be labeled with the country of origin. The COOL requirement does not apply to prepared foods offered for retail sale at food service establishments. This means that prepared products such as poke currently have no labeling requirement. This bill would extend country of origin labeling requirements for certain ahi tuna products at Hawai'i retail establishments, enabling consumers to make informed choices when purchasing seafood.

Yellowfin and bigeye tuna are highly migratory species that are managed at the international, national, and state levels. Internationally, fisheries targeting these species are managed by regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs), which set annual catch quotas for participating countries. Domestically, commercial landings of these species are closely monitored to ensure compliance with quotas established by RFMOs. The largest domestic fishery for ahi in the State, the Hawai'i longline fishery, is closely managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) through a limited entry permit system and strict regulations

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

which include mandatory reporting, observer coverage, crew training, gear identification requirements, special area closures, and other measures to minimize impacts on bycatch and protected species. Fisheries that land tuna in other countries often lack this high level of management oversight.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Thursday, February 20, 2025, at 2:00PM
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

RE: HB534 HD2 Relating to Labeling Requirements

Aloha e Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 534 House Draft 2 (HB534 HD2), which prohibits the sale of raw ahi and raw ahi products in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed.

HB534 HD2 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for 21st Century Agriculture. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth, enhance workforce opportunities, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

Hawaii's food industry lacks clear frozen ahi labeling, especially in retail stores. Many consumers mistakenly believe they are buying fresh, local tuna, when much of the ahi sold is imported, previously frozen, and treated with carbon monoxide to enhance color. Federal labeling gaps allow retailers to omit this information, causing consumer confusion and unfair competition for local fisheries. Despite Hawaii's \$100 million tuna industry, imported products dominate sales, and many poke and sushi items labeled "prepared fresh" or "locally made" contain foreign, gas-treated fish.

The proposed law would require all raw ahi sold in retail stores—fresh, frozen, mixed, or marinated—to clearly state its country of origin. This ensures transparency, informed choices, and fair competition by distinguishing local from imported ahi. Expanding labeling rules would prevent misleading advertising and build consumer trust in Hawaii's seafood market. The Chamber supports this legislation to protect local fisheries, ensure honest marketing, and help consumers make informed decisions about their food.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 534 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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February 20, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON HB 534, HD2
RELATING TO LABELING REQUIREMENTS

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, 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 534, HD2, which prohibits the sale of processed food item with raw ahi in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed.

Hawai'i is known for its high-quality ahi, which are caught under strict fishery management standards. Imported ahi, often caught under less stringent regulations, is sometimes misleadingly marketed as "Hawaiian" or "local." This measure ensures that consumers can distinguish between authentic Hawai'i-landed ahi and imported products

Many consumers prefer to buy locally sourced food to support the local economy. Labeling processed ahi by country of origin gives them the necessary information to make informed choices.

We should protect Hawai'i's fishing industry, support local fishermen, and ensure consumer transparency by requiring country-of-origin labeling for processed ahi products.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.



FISHING TALES

with **Mike
Sakamoto**

Testimony to the House Committee on Finance

Thursday, February 20, 2025, 2:00 PM

Testimony in Support of HB 534, Relating to Labeling Requirements

To: The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice-Chair
Members of the Committee

My name is Stefanie Sakamoto, and I am testifying on behalf of Fishing Tales with Mike Sakamoto, a company that was founded by my father in 1985.

We are in strong support of HB 534, Relating to Labeling Requirements. This bill prohibits the sale of raw ahi and raw ahi products in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed.

The philosophy of Fishing Tales with Mike Sakamoto has always been to promote the culture of Hawaii and to share Mike's love for fish and fishing. In recent years, ahi (tuna) has seen a surge in popularity in culinary and online circles, and so it has become trendy to consume, photograph, and post online. This bill, HB 534, seeks simply to provide consumers with necessary information on the geographic origin of the tuna so that people know what they are buying and eating. Hawaii-caught ahi is special, and deserves to be labeled as such.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



February 19, 2025

Testimony in Support of HB534(HD2)

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Longline Association (HLA) strongly supports HB534(HD2). HLA members are comprised of 150 active longline vessels operating out of Honolulu Harbor and the United Fishing Agency (Honolulu Fish Auction). The Hawaii longline fleet is the largest food producer in Hawaii, landing approximately 30 million pounds fish annually. The Hawaii longline fleet, which primarily targets ahi, is also Hawaii's largest fishery, comprising approximately 85% of the State's commercial marine landings. Approximately 80% of our fleet's landings stay in Hawaii with the remainder sold in US mainland markets.

HLA supports HB534(HD2) because it would provide country of origin labeling for raw processed ahi sold at retail establishment for products such as poke, sashimi, and sushi. Existing federal law applies to seafood country of origin including fish fillets, tuna steaks, and loins as well as fruits, vegetables, and meat. County of origin labeling requirements do not exist for "processed" ahi such such as poke.

Ahi poke sold at retail establishments is dominated by previously frozen, carbon monoxide treated fish. However, there is a common misconception that this previously frozen, carbon monoxide treated tuna is derived from Hawaii fisheries, when in fact it is imported from foreign sources. A likely cause for some of this confusion is that retailers often use tricky advertising that mislead consumers into thinking the product is fresh or locally caught such as: "freshly made," and "locally prepared." Moreover, simply using the Hawaiian words "ahi poke" implies locally caught tuna. No ahi landed in Hawaii is being treated with carbon monoxide for commercial sale, whereas Hawaii landed tuna is typically only marketed as "fresh" without any origin information.

While the sale of carbon monoxide treated tuna is prohibited in Japan, European Union, and Australia, among other places, HB534(HD2) would not ban it from being sold in Hawaii. Rather, HB534(HD2) would provide consumers with more information on where the ahi in their poke comes from, thereby empowering consumers to make more informed choices.

By passing this bill, Hawaii would join Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi in states enacting enhanced seafood country of origin labeling laws to benefit consumers and local seafood producers from impacts of cheaper imports.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of HB534(HD2).

Mahalo,

Eric K. Kingma, Ph.D.
Executive Director

HB-534-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 10:00:42 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tai-ni Xia	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Dear Honorable Chair Yamashita, Honorable Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I write in strong support of HB534. Foreign, frozen, gassed ahi should not be able to be labeled as local. Please pass this bill. I'd like to thank the Honorable Representative Tyson Miayke for sponsoring this bill.

Respectfully,

Tai-ni Xia

HB-534-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 5:24:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William K. Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB534

HB-534-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:41:31 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chloe Amos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Chloe Amos and I strongly support HB534. As a consumer, it is extremely useful for me to know where my ahi came from, as certain countries maintain fishing practices that are detrimental to the health of our oceans. Increasing the traceability of our seafood is a small but incredibly important step for consumer awareness and decision-making power that can positively affect the health of our oceans and thereby our entire planet. And increasing the health of our planet has never been important for sustaining human life on earth than it is today.

Thank you,

Chloe Amos

HB-534-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 6:11:47 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenny Yagodich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT for HB534 HD2 to prohibit the sale of any processed food item with raw ahi product as an ingredient in retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed.