

**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**  
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD**  
**CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND**  
**AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2025**  
**1:02 PM**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**SENATE BILL NO. 1185**  
**RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.**

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill No. 1185 that establishes within the Department of Agriculture (Department) an eleven-member Working Group to be chaired by the Chair of the Board of Agriculture to review and make recommendations on amending or repealing unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture. There is an appropriation. The Department offers comments.

The measure identifies the following three issues that shall be considered for amending or repeal by the Working Group:

- (1) Restrictions on leases of State agricultural land that prohibit a residence on the property;
- (2) Restrictions on leases of State agricultural land that prohibit the raising of poultry and swine on the property; and
- (3) Caps on agricultural operation loan rates.

Other laws "pertaining to agriculture" that are possibly "unnecessary or obsolete" may be considered for review and recommendation by the Working Group.

The Department has concerns with respect to the initial issues to be considered by the Task Force. Both the Agricultural Resources Management and Agricultural Loan divisions do not concur that the issues of the operating loan cap, house building and raising of poultry and swine are unnecessary, obsolete or impede the growth and



success of agriculture in Hawaii. In lieu of the proposed Working Group, the Department recommends that the Legislature commission a study to be done by a neutral party to comprehensively, efficiently and unbiasedly determine the magnitude and extent of laws that qualify as unnecessary or obsolete and meriting amendment or repeal.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony.



# **Hawaii Agriculture Research Center**

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## **TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT**

### **HOUSE BILL NO. 781**

### **RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

**Monday February 3, 2025**

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and Members of the Committee:

My name is Robbie Melton. I am Executive Director of the Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (HARC). I am testifying today on behalf of the center and our research and support staff.

#### **HARC strongly supports Senate Bill 1185 relating to agriculture**

HARC is a non-profit organization whose mission is to support agriculture in Hawaii through research and infrastructure preservation. HARC was established in 1895 as the Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association dedicated to supporting the sugar industry through applied research. When the sugar industry was on the decline our organization expanded to include other crops important to Hawaii agriculture and native forestry.

In 1996 HSPA became Hawaii Agriculture Research Center, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization with two experiment stations in Kunia and Maunawili. Our organization specializes in horticulture crop research, including agronomy and plant nutrition, plant physiology, breeding, genetic engineering and tissue culture, and control of diseases and pests through integrated pest management. HARC's research and education encompasses forestry, coffee, cacao, forages, vegetable crops, tropical fruits, and other diversified crops.

HARC transfers its research discoveries and best practices to Hawaii's producers throughout the islands to promote economic vitality through agriculture. We offer internships and other educational opportunities to train the existing and upcoming agricultural workforce.

HARC has been able to adapt to the changing agriculture industry, however, state laws have been slow to change and help farmers who work hard and face many challenges in producing food that nourishes Hawaii. I am grateful that this bill supports a working committee to review and make recommendations to amend or repeal unnecessary or obsolete laws pertaining to agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Hawaii's agricultural needs.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759  
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e-mail [info@hfbf.org](mailto:info@hfbf.org); [www.hfbf.org](http://www.hfbf.org)

February 3, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**TESTIMONY ON SB 1185**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
1:02 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, 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 SB 1185**, 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.



#### Officers

Kaipo Kekona  
State President

Anabella Bruch  
Vice-President

Maureen Datta  
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Reba Lopez  
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Mason Scharer  
Haleakala, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros  
Mauna Kahalawai,  
Maui

Kaipo Kekona  
Lahaina, Maui

Kilia Avelino-Purdy  
Molokai

Negus Manna  
Lana'i

India Clark  
North Shore, Oahu

Christian Zuckerman  
Wai'anae, Oahu

Ted Radovich  
Waimanalo, Oahu

Vincent Kimura  
Honolulu, Oahu

Natalie Urminska  
Kauai

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Environment Committee,

The Hawaii 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. **HFUU supports SB1185 and seeks an amendment to be included in the working group.**

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 in Section 2 (b):

(12) The president of the Hawaii Farmers Union, or the president's designee, who shall be invited by the chairperson of the working group.

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 Hawaii's agricultural industry.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director

Hawai'i Farmers Union



LAND USE RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION OF HAWAII

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Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
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January 31, 2025

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert M. “Tim” Richards, III, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

**Support of SB 1185 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.)**

**Monday, February 3, 2025, at 1:02 p.m.;**  
**Conference Room 224 & 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 SB 1185** 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.

**SB 1185.** 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 SB 1185 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 SB 1185**, and respectfully urges your favorable consideration of this bill.

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



February 2, 2025

To: Chair Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Harbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Subject: **SB1185**, Relating to agriculture

Aloha, I am submitting this testimony in **support** of SB1185. 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.

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.

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**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**

Honolulu, HI 96813  
food@purplemaia.org

Mahalo,  
Jeanette Burdick & the Food+ Policy Team  
#fixourfoodsystem

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**SB-1185**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 6:07:35 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/3/2025 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ronald Weidenbach	Testifying for Hawaii Fish Company Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the intent of SB1185 to review and update existing agriculture statutes and rules.



**EAST OAHU COUNTY FARM BUREAU**  
**910 CALIFORNIA AVE., WAHIAWA, HI 96786**

February 2, 2025

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair, and Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards III, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Agriculture and the Environment  
State Capitol, 415 S. Beretania St.  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee,

The East O'ahu County Farm Bureau, which represents approximately 420 farmers and supporters of agriculture from Waimanalo to Kahuku, **strongly supports SB 1185**, "Relating to Agriculture," which would establish a working group to review laws pertaining to agriculture and to make recommendations for repealing or amending unnecessary or obsolete laws.

Many existing laws and policies unnecessarily restrict agricultural operations. Some of these rules date from plantation days and do not reflect the current realities of an extremely diverse industry which includes farms and ranches of different sizes raising many types of crops and livestock using different farming techniques. In order to support the growth of agriculture in Hawai'i and provide for greater food security, it is time for a comprehensive review of all laws and policies that affect agriculture. We therefore respectfully urge your Committee to pass SB 1185.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter of great importance to Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

Frederick M. Mencher  
for Grant Hamachi, President  
East O'ahu County Farm Bureau

**SB-1185**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 5:12:30 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/3/2025 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Randy Cabral	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

**SB-1185**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 3:31:13 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/3/2025 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Theresa M Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 1185 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

Mahalo,

Theresa Thompson

**SB-1185**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 7:33:51 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/3/2025 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Hawai'i is consistently ranked as one of the worst states to do business in. We are also one of the most over-regulated states. Reducing outdated and antiquated regulations is crucial to building prosperity and reducing crushing cost of living burdens on people here.

I strongly urge this Committee to SUPPORT this bill!

**SB-1185**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 10:00:02 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/3/2025 1:02:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure.