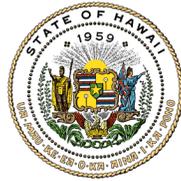


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

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
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

APRIL 1, 2025
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308

SENATE BILL NO. 177, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 177, SD1, HD1. The bill authorizes the Division of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture to adopt, amend, and repeal rules to develop an assessment and approval process to import and move aquatic livestock in the State. It requires the Aquaculture Program to develop a risk-based framework and biocontainment standards for the aquatic livestock assessment and approval process and makes appropriations. The Department supports this bill.

By implementing more robust assessment processes, SB177, SD1, HD1 promotes responsible and sustainable growth of Hawaii's aquaculture industry which has a rich history and significant potential for expansion. A risk-based framework would help evaluate potential risks associated with the movement of aquatic species and better balance industry growth while minimizing negative impact to native species and ecosystems.

As such, the Department supports this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



Benson Medina
Director

Dennis Lin
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

25 Aupuni Street, Room 1301 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720-4252
(808) 961-8366 • Fax (808) 935-1205
E-mail: chresdev@co.hawaii.hi.us

March 31, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TUESDAY, April 1, 2025
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308

TESTIMONY ON SB 177 SD1 HD1
Relating to Aquaculture

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

I am Benson Medina, Director of the Department of Research and Development, County of Hawai'i. One of the agricultural objectives of this department is to "support research, development, control, and education that improves agricultural production, quality, resilience, and producer viability or reduces the impact of pests or disease on agricultural crops, livestock, forests, or the community."

The County of Hawai'i provides written testimony in **SUPPORT of SB177 SD1 HD1**, authorizing the Division of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture to adopt, amend, and repeal rules to develop an assessment and approval process to import and move aquatic livestock in the State and requiring the Aquaculture Program to develop a risk-based framework and biocontainment standards for the aquatic livestock assessment and approval process.

Hawai'i's aquaculture industry is a leader in the U.S and this measure provides important protections for the industry to continue to support economic growth. Hawai'i County is ranked #1 in the State and #2 in the U.S in terms of aquaculture sales, with aquaculturists generating \$69,393,000 in sales in 2022 ([USDA Census of Agriculture, 2022](#)). The 870-acre Hawaii Ocean Science and Technology Park on Hawai'i Island has created more than 600 jobs and has a \$150 million annual economic impact, even withstanding economic shocks from the COVID pandemic ([Civil Beat, 2023](#)). However, processes to import and move aquatic livestock in the State must be put in place to support the longevity of aquaculture operations and biosecurity of aquatic ecosystems.

Disease can devastate aquaculture industries, and a risk-based framework and biocontainment standards are important protections for both aquaculture operations and

March 31, 2025

Page 2

aquatic ecosystems. OsHV-1 microvariants, also known as Oyster herpes, devastated the Australian Pacific oyster industry, putting businesses on the brink of collapse and costing the jobs of oyster farm workers ([ABC News, 2016](#)). Currently in Hawai‘i, imported oyster broodstock are certified as disease-free pre-arrival to the islands yet do not undergo post-arrival inspection. The biosecurity processes outlined in SB177 SD1 HD1 would not only help prevent disease from entering aquaculture operations in Hawai‘i but also help protect native aquatic species.

Thank you for championing agriculture in Hawai‘i and for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of SB177 SD1 HD1**.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benson Medina". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Benson Medina
Director



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

April 1, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON SB 177, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE

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 SB 177, SD1, HD1, which authorizes the Division of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture to adopt, amend, and repeal rules to develop an assessment and approval process to import and move aquatic livestock in the State and requires the Aquaculture Program to develop a risk-based framework and biocontainment standards for the aquatic livestock assessment and approval process.

Hawai'i's aquaculture industry farm gate value is \$89.6M, the second-highest contribution to the economy in diversified agriculture. Hawai'i's favorable climate and geography allow for inherent advantages benefitting aquaculture production.

The Legislature acknowledged the importance of Hawai'i's aquaculture industry by revitalizing the Aquaculture Development Program through Act 63, SLH 2019. However, more investment and research are needed in the aquaculture industry, including research into different types of aquaculture, aquaculture system optimization, and the economic implications of various methods of aquaculture production.

The transfer of aquaculture import oversight from Plant Industries to Animal Industries would place this process under direct veterinary oversight with standardized science-based assessment protocols. Such evaluations are increasingly important as disease, quarantine, and invasive species considerations become increasingly necessary to help safeguard the environment and existing industry from external risks.

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



Testimony Presented to
Committee on Finance
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Tuesday, April 1, 2025, 2:00pm
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

by
Ron Weidenbach, HAAA President
SUBJECT: Support for intent of SB177 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO AQUACULTURE

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

The Hawaii Aquaculture and Aquaponics Association (HAAA), established in 1975 and representing aquaculture industry members statewide supports the intent of SB177 SD1 HD1 which would transfer the oversight and management of aquaculture import permits from DOA Plant Quarantine to DOA Animal Industries. However, **we respectfully request your consideration of two clarifying amendments to address specific industry concerns:**

- 1) specify that Animal Industries' veterinary oversight will be provided for the Aquaculture Program's development and implementation of standardized assessment protocols and subsequent import permit decision making, and**
- 2) specify that prior DOA Plant Quarantine import approvals and permits for existing aquaculture operations and research be transferred to Animal Industries and remain in effect so as to not disrupt already approved industry production and research and development efforts.**

JUSTIFICATION: The proposed transfer would place this critical oversight and management process under Animal Industries which has the critical veterinary staff expertise. However, the stated responsibility to develop and implement standardized science-based assessment protocols is currently indicted to be under the Aquaculture Program which has marketing and business expertise but no expertise in veterinary, aquatic, or environmental sciences.

Science-based veterinary oversight needs to be specifically required in the development and implementation of the standardized assessment protocols and subsequent import permit decision making. Science-based evaluations are increasingly important and necessary as disease, invasive species, and onsite quarantine capacity become increasingly critical and necessary considerations in this import permitting assessment process to safeguard the biosecurity of Hawaii's natural environment and existing aquaculture operations from external biological risks.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the intent of SB177 SD1 HD1 and to respectfully request your consideration our two noted amendments.

SB-177-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 8:19:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/1/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good idea. Makes sense. Mahalo!

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB177 SD1 HD1

Committee on Finance

Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

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

My name is Hunter Hurtado, and I am a student at Hawai'i Pacific University studying Political Science and Philosophy. I am in strong support of **SB177 SD1 HD1**, which strengthens Hawai'i's environmental protections around the expansion of the aquaculture industry. This bill ensures that the expansion of this industry does not come at the expense of our unique, beautiful, and fragile marine ecosystems.

Hawai'i's āina is deeply interconnected, and our policies should reflect a commitment to preserving that biodiversity and ecological balance. As a student coming from the mainland and now studying in Hawai'i, I have come to appreciate the strong emphasis being placed on environmental stewardship and I feel strongly that we must be leaders in upholding that paramount responsibility. **SB177 SD1 HD1** upholds the states commitment by aligning with some of the environmental ethics principles which I have been studying. From an environmental ethics perspective, this bill aligns very well with the important concepts of ecocentrism and biocentrism, which understand the intrinsic value of nature and place it above its utility to humanity. These concepts alongside the precautionary principle support this bill's intent that whenever environmental harm is possible, certain proactive measures must be taken so as to prevent damage rather than having to wait for definitive proof before any action is taken. Being proactive saves time, resources, lives, and our planet.

Hawai'i has the unique opportunity to be a global leader in sustainable environmental policy, and passing this bill would reaffirm the state's dedication to responsible and ethical stewardship of the earth. As a student and a fellow person, I strongly urge the committee to support **SB177 SD1 HD1** to ensure that our environmental policies reflect both scientific and ethical responsibility.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Hunter Hurtado