

**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 COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**FEBRUARY 21, 2025  
10:30 AM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 211**

**SENATE BILL NO. 177 SD1  
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE**

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 177 SD1. 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 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

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**February 25, 2025**

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

**THURSDAY, February 27, 2025**

**10:30 AM**

**CONFERENCE ROOM 211**

TESTIMONY ON SB 177 SD1

Relating to Aquaculture

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki 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**, 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

February 25, 2023

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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 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.

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

**SB-177-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:27:32 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/27/2025 10:30:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b>                  | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Cathy Goeggel       | Testifying for Animal Rights Hawai'i | Oppose                    | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Animal Rights Hawai'i opposes SB177. Mahalo

**SB-177-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 1:58:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/27/2025 10:30:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b>   | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Katie Kealoha       | Testifying for Marine Science Learning Center at Waianae High | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Katie Kealoha and I am the coordinator of the Marine Science Learning Center at Wai‘anae High School. I am writing in support of SB177, enabling decision making regarding aquaculture livestock.

Our program hosts a salt water aquaculture facility and teaches students both scientific and workplace skills through a hands on, work based learning approach. We also are an eduprise, where students can earn funding for their activities as well as participate in internships through raising aquaculture products for sale. Our program has long sold seaweed within our community and has recently worked towards expanding to fish production. Unfortunately, current regulations around importing tilapia as a livestock fish have impeded our ability to have healthy tilapia stock for our students to grow. This year many of our student projects were compromised by issues with *Francisella*, a bacteria that is highly contagious and that most tilapia are susceptible to due to poor genetics. It is very important for our program that we have access to healthy brood stock so our students can expand their skill set and learning, and can work towards providing healthy and sustainably produced protein for our community.

This bill would enable decision making regarding importing these species to be more accessible, and for experts to assess the risk and determine if these animals can be brought in and made available. I hope the committee will consider passing it.

Mahalo,

Katie Kealoha

**SB-177-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:54:22 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/27/2025 10:30:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b>  | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Cecilia Viljoen     | Testifying for Kowa Premium Foods Hawaii Corporation (KPFHC) | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

KPFHC is in support of this bill and trust that this DOA Division has capable staff and measures in place to ensure rules with regards to import and movement of aquatic livestock being in line with World Organization for Animal Health and Aquatic Stewardship Council. This said, KPFHC trusts that DOA is supportive of the critical role that aquaculture and feasible and sustainable aquaculture businesses play in Hawaii, our islands being remote with limited food sources. Import permits and animal movement is often part and parcel of getting an aquaculture up and running, and the timing is critical too because markets change quickly and is fickle, making having permits in place sooner rather than later a very critical part of the success of the business.

**SB-177-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:12:26 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/27/2025 10:30:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b>                            | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Robert Endreson     | Testifying for Kohala<br>Mountsin Fish Company | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

We are in strong support.



Testimony Presented to  
Committee on Ways and Means  
Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Sen. Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair  
Thursday, February 27, 2025, 10:30am  
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference  
by

Ron Weidenbach, HAAA President

SUBJECT: Support for intent of SB177 SD1 – RELATING TO AQUACULTURE

Aloha Sen. Dela Cruz, Chair, Sen. Moriwaki, Vice Chair, 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 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 the following two amendments to:**

- 1)** specify that essential veterinary oversight be provided in the development and implementation of the standardized assessment protocols and subsequent import permit decision making, and
- 2)** specify that prior approvals and import permits of existing operations be transferred from Plant Quarantine to Animal Industries and remain in effect.

The proposed transfer would place this critical 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 Aquaculture and Livestock Support Services which has marketing and business expertise but no science or veterinary expertise.

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.

In summary, the essential element of this transfer and assessment process is to ensure that this a science-based review and approval process with veterinary oversight which exists in Animal Industries.

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



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February 27, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

**TESTIMONY ON SB 177, SD1**  
RELATING TO AQUACULTURE

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference  
10:30 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, 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**, 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.

**SB-177-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 8:56:11 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/27/2025 10:30:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Glen Kagamida       | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

SUPPORT. GOOD IDEA WORTH TRYING. MAHALO!