

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025
10:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

SENATE BILL NO. 448, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Kahaloe, Vice Chair Kusch and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 448, SD1 that appropriates funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation to acquire a conservation easement in Central Oahu.

The Department of Agriculture supports this bill as it will preserve agricultural lands for food production that leads to increased food security for Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HUI HO'OULU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS
March 07, 2025
10:30 a.m.

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 448 SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairperson Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** of Senate Bill No. 448 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation to acquire a 2,636 acre conservation easement in central Oahu, in addition to comments. ADC respectfully requests an appropriation of \$14,000,000 for the acquisition, which would be 50% of the current listing price. This conservation easement would allow ADC to better support local agriculture while protecting the land through the preservation of open spaces.

Use of state funds to purchase an interest in land as required by this bill does not appear to satisfy the requirements of section 163D-31(b), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). Therefore, the bill may not create adequate authority for the ADC to complete the acquisition.

HRS section 163D-31 (b) states:

Acquisition of important agricultural lands authorized by the legislature.

* * *

(b) The acquisition shall be authorized by a bill enacted into law and shall contain:

- (1) A statement of the value of the interest in land as a resource to the State;
- (2) A description of the specific parcel of land or agricultural easement proposed to be acquired;
- (3) The name of the owner of the property; and
- (4) The estimated costs of acquiring the interest in the land.

To avoid this issue, we respectfully request that this bill be amended to include the items specified in HRS section 163D-31(b)(1)-(4).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.



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March 7, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON SB 448, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
10:30 AM

Aloha Chair Kahaloe, Vice-Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committees:

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 448, SD1, which appropriates funds to the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) for the acquisition of a conservation easement in Central O'ahu to ensure the long-term preservation of agricultural lands for food production and sustainability.

Hawai'i's agricultural industry faces increasing challenges, including losing prime farmland to urban development, rising operational costs, and competition from imported goods. The State Constitution (Article XI, Sections 3) mandates conserving and protecting agricultural lands, promoting diversified agriculture, increasing agricultural self-sufficiency, and assuring the availability of agriculturally suitable lands. SB 448 aligns with these mandates by securing critical agricultural lands for future generations of farmers.

Moreover, the State has enacted ambitious goals to increase local food production. Act 175 (2021) requires that at least 30% of food served in Hawai'i's public schools be locally sourced by 2030, and Act 176 (2021) mandates that 50% of produce purchased by state departments be locally grown by 2050. Meeting these targets will require long-term access to agricultural lands—lands that are increasingly at risk of conversion to non-agricultural uses.

By funding a conservation easement, SB 448, SD1 will:

- Preserve farmland for active agricultural use and ensure it remains available for future food production.
- Provide stability for farmers who depend on agricultural land for their livelihoods.
- Support the State's food security goals by protecting productive land from development pressures.
- Help the local economy by sustaining agricultural jobs and local food production.

Agriculture should be a pillar of Hawai'i's economy and food security, and proactive efforts are needed to ensure its future survival and success. SB 448 represents an essential investment in Hawai'i's agricultural future.

We urge the committee to pass this measure and help safeguard Hawai'i's farmlands for future generations.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



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Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems Committee,

The Hawai'i 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. **HFU supports SB448.**

This bill will help ensure that vital farmland is preserved for current and future generations of local farmers. Protecting land from development pressures will bolster food security in Hawaii, allowing farmers to focus on growing diverse crops that meet the needs of our communities and support our local economy.

The conservation easement will also serve as a vital tool in promoting environmental stewardship. Preserving agricultural land in Central Oahu means maintaining open spaces that contribute to biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and the conservation of natural resources. This commitment to land preservation is in alignment with broader goals to mitigate climate change's impacts and foster resilience within our agricultural systems. By supporting SB448, we are not only investing in the agricultural sector but also in the ecological health and sustainability of Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union