



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. NO. 666, RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

DATE: Thursday, January 30, 2025 **TIME:** 3:05 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 229

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Candace J. Park, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Kim and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill requires the University of Hawai'i at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources to convert certain temporary agriculture educator positions into permanent positions and to establish a full-time agriculture education coordinator position. The bill appropriates funds for this purpose.

Article X, section 6, of the Hawai'i Constitution gives the Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i "exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university." Section 6 further provides: "This section shall not limit the power of the legislature to enact laws of statewide concern. The legislature shall have the exclusive jurisdiction to identify laws of statewide concern." If the Committee decides to pass this bill, we recommend an amendment that adds a statement identifying this bill as a law of statewide concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
January 30, 2025 at 3:05 PM

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 666 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support and offer amendments to SB 666 relating to the University of Hawai'i (UH) that converts two temporary farm-to-school extension agent positions within the UH at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources into permanent positions, and establishes an agriculture education coordinator position, and appropriates funds.

SB 666 will make a significant investment in strengthening the agriculture workforce development pipeline by supporting statewide efforts to develop future farmers and a society that values and understands the vital role of agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resource systems in advancing personal, local and global well-being. As CTAHR had the privilege to lead and complete the report required by SR 80 (2015), we support establishing and funding a full-time agriculture education coordinator position to advance the goals outlined in this bill.

In regards to SECTION 2 (a), CTAHR supports converting two temporary farm to school extension agent positions into two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) permanent positions, one on 'Oahu and one on Moloka'i. The bill refers to a temporary Extension Agent being employed on Kaua'i and the position to be made permanent on the island of Kaua'i. The current position is located on the island of Moloka'i, and we request an amendment to reflect our current employee's location on the island of Moloka'i.

We also respectfully offer the following amendments to SECTION 1, page 3, lines 18 - 19; and page 4, lines 10-11; SECTION 2.(a), lines 12-13; (b) lines 18-19; SECTION 3., lines 17-18 to correct the name of the college to university of Hawaii at Manoa college of tropical agriculture and human [resources] resilience (CTAHR). The renaming of the college was approved in October 2024 to better align CTAHR's name to its land-grant

mission of improving the human condition and human use of natural resources through research, education and Cooperative Extension.

We support SB 666 with the suggested amendments, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.



HIPHI Board

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Community-Based Research &
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Community Health
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COVID-19 Response

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Network

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: January 29, 2025

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education

RE: Support for SB 666, Relating to the University of Hawai'i

Hrg: Thursday, January 30, 2025 at 3:05 pm, Conf. Rm. 229

Hawai'i Public Health Institute¹ (HIPHI) works to advance policy and systems change to reduce disparities and improve the health of Hawai'i residents. HIPHI is home to and testifies here on behalf of the Hawai'i Farm to School Network.

HIPHI appreciates the opportunity to **support SB 666**, which provides essential funding to establish a full-time Agriculture Education Coordinator and convert two temporary Farm-to-School Extension Agent positions to permanent ones within the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR). These positions are critical to strengthening agriculture education across the state, fostering a new generation of farmers, and ensuring a sustainable, resilient agricultural workforce for Hawai'i's future.

Requested Amendment

We request that the bill correct the location of one of the Farm-to-School Extension Agent positions. The bill states that one of the positions is on Kaua'i but is located on Moloka'i. Accurate representation of this funding allocation is essential for supporting underserved agricultural education communities.

Hawai'i faces a critical shortage of farmers, with the average age of a farmer now at 60 years old.² This alarming trend threatens the state's long-term food security and self-sufficiency. A primary factor contributing to the decline in new farmers is the lack of access to agriculture education and professional development for educators. Without a structured framework, students receive minimal exposure to agriculture and food systems education, leading to decreased interest in pursuing careers. The Agriculture Education Coordinator will play an essential role in bridging this gap by coordinating professional development and training for

¹ Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

² Market Analysis and News Branch, et al. "November 2023 Farm Labor Statistics."

www.hdoa.hawaii.gov, report, 2023,

hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/files/2023/11/Farm-Labor-Stats-2023_2nd-Half_SOH_11.30.2023F.pdf.



educators at all levels, ensuring alignment between Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways and CTAHR's academic and research offerings. This alignment is critical for equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in agriculture-related careers, supporting economic growth and sustainability goals outlined in the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) strategic plan³.

The Agriculture Education Coordinator will facilitate networking and professional development opportunities for educators and stakeholders, enhancing access to resources and best practices in agriculture education. This position will also lead the P-20 Agriculture Education Working Group, fostering new partnerships that strengthen agricultural education initiatives statewide. Research indicates that well-structured agricultural education programs increase student participation and success in agriculture-related careers.⁴ By expanding these programs and training more agriculture educators, Hawai'i can cultivate a new generation of farmers and food systems professionals, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and sustainable local food system.

Please pass SB 666 with the correction to the Moloka'i position and fully fund the Agriculture Education Coordinator position. Investing in this role is necessary to strengthen agriculture education, expand workforce development, and ensure a sustainable future for Hawai'i's agricultural sector. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Mahalo nui loa,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kawika Kahiapo", written over a white background.

Kawika Kahiapo
Hawai'i Farm to School Network Program Coordinator
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

³ Hawai'i State Department of Education. *STRATEGIC PLAN PHASE II IMPLEMENTATION PLAN*. 2023, www.hawaiipublicschools.org/DOE%20Forms/Advancing%20Education/2023-29-ImplementationPlan.pdf.

⁴NIFA. *NIFA ANNUAL REPORT FY2022*. 2022.



LATE

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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

January 30, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

TESTIMONY ON SB 666
RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
3:05 PM

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice-Chair Kidani, 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 666, which converts two temporary farm-to-school extension agent positions within the University of Hawaii at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources into permanent positions and establishes an agriculture education coordinator position.

It is commonly known that the average age of a farmer in Hawai'i is approximately 60 years old. For agriculture to be sustainable, and to produce more local crops we, as a society, must cultivate the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

The Hawai'i Department of Labor and Industrial Relations undertook a series of facilitated meetings with farmers, ranchers, educators, and a diverse group of stakeholders across the state between 2007 and 2011 to address Ag Labor. The Hawai'i Agriculture Skill Panel Report was the result of the stakeholder meetings. The report made a number of recommendations, of which several common themes emerged. #1 of those themes was "Increasing youth education and training".

In 2013, the Hawai'i State Legislature established the Agriculture Workforce Advisory Board via HB 749. This Board convenes, in part, to execute the recommendations of the Hawai'i Agriculture Skill Panel Report. This board established a program by which educators and school administrators can be exposed to and incentivized to adopt existing broad-based agricultural curriculums. This was an important step toward the future of agriculture in Hawai'i.

In 2015, Hawai'i State Senate Resolution No. 80 requested that the UH-Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) develop an "implementation strategy and recommendations for the creation of a statewide coordinated framework of support for P-20 agriculture education, including any proposed legislation." SR 80 sought to build upon CTAHR's expertise and create a coordinated effort to address agriculture education. It bears mentioning that CTAHR currently serves on the Ag Workforce Development Advisory Board.

HFB supports initiatives that help to educate and reconnect our children with agriculture. Through agriculture education programs, our children will gain an understanding and appreciation for agriculture, which will result in healthier eating habits, stronger support for Hawai'i's agriculture industry, and will contribute to Hawai'i's food sustainability. We still have a long way to go to educate our children about agriculture. Creating an agriculture education coordinator position and supporting Farm to School Extension Agent positions will help the education process. It is an investment to have well-informed consumers and supporters of Hawai'i's agricultural industry in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, Oahu

Natalie Urminska
Kauai

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Senate Higher Education 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 SB666.**

Extension agents play a vital role in bridging the gap between academic research and practical application, providing essential guidance to educators and students. Their work not only helps to cultivate an interest in farming among Hawaii's youth but also supports the development of a robust local food system by nurturing the next generation of farmers. By converting two temporary farm-to-school extension agent positions within the University of Hawaii at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources into permanent roles, this bill ensures continued support and expertise for our local schools and communities.

Furthermore, the establishment of an agriculture education coordinator position is an indispensable addition to these efforts. This role will be pivotal in orchestrating statewide agricultural education initiatives, ensuring a cohesive strategy that aligns with the unique needs and cultural contexts of our diverse island communities. The appropriation of funds to support these positions demonstrates a committed investment in Hawaii's agricultural future, fostering self-sufficiency, food security, and environmental stewardship.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawaii Farmers Union



The Committee on Higher Education
January 30, 2025
Room 229

RE: **SB 666, Relating to the University of Hawaii**

Attention: Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle Kidani and Members of the
Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) supports SB666, relating to the
University of Hawaii, and the amendments proposed by the University of Hawaii.

SB 666 converts two temporary farm-to-school extension agent positions within the
University of Hawaii's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources into
permanent positions. To ensure the recruitment and retention of the positions, it is
essential for the FTE appropriation to have a recurring, general funded designation.

**UHPA supports and requests the passage of SB 666 with the University of
Hawaii's suggested amendments.**

Respectfully submitted,

Christian L. Fern
Executive Director
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly

SB-666

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 3:44:08 AM

Testimony for HRE on 1/30/2025 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lydi Morgan Bernal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education,

I am testifying in my personal capacity in **strong support** of this bill, as an individual who has been dedicated to helping strengthen Hawaii’s farm to school movement for almost 20 years.

The three positions supported by this bill are critical to a thriving future for agriculture in Hawai‘i, and to the long term success of the **Hawai‘i Farm to School Program**, established within the Hawai‘i Department of Education (HIDOE) via Act 175, 2021 (HRS 302A-405.5 & 405.6). In addition to reaching 30% local school food by 2030, the Program’s purposes are to:

1. Improve student health;
2. Develop an educated agricultural workforce;
3. Enrich the local food system through the support and increase of local food procurement for the State's public schools;
4. Accelerate garden and farm-based education for the State's public school students; and
5. Expand the relationships between public schools and agricultural communities.

It is very timely that the two farm to school extension agent positions be made permanent within the state budget, as the stability of their current (and temporary) federal funding is unsure. The two agents, serving the islands of O‘ahu and Molokai, directly support HIDOE to sustainably and successfully implement the Hawai‘i Farm to School Program through the following activities:

- Providing **technical assistance** to schools for implementation of farm to school programming for students, including:
 - Starting and sustaining school garden and food tree programs;
 - Integrating experiential nutrition, agriculture, and food systems education;
 - Organizing local food samplings and recipe taste tests, farm field trips, chef visits, and family and community events;
 - Promoting local foods on school menus for increased consumption; and
 - Implementing food waste reduction and composting programs.
- Connecting schools with **resources** including curriculum, supplies, funding, community-based partner organizations, training opportunities, and more.

- Conducting **teacher professional development** relating to farm to school and leading to long term improvements in teaching practice and student engagement and success through:
 - Credit-earning PD courses in partnership with HIDOE and HSTA;
 - Skill-building workshops; and
 - Informational webinars, panels, booths, and presentations.
- Cultivating communication and collaboration among food producers, processors, aggregators, hubs, distributors, and HIDOE school food services toward the achievement of **local food goals**.

In 2015, the Senate passed SR80, requesting the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (now “Human Resilience”), i.e. UH CTAHR, to “convene a working group to develop a coordinated framework of support for preschool through post-secondary (P-20) agriculture education and a plan for implementation.” The three positions supported by this bill are key components of the P-20 Agriculture Education Implementation Plan, which is laid out within the working group’s Report to the 2019 Legislature (DC149, 2019). They fulfill the “state-level” (agriculture education coordinator) and “community-level agriculture educator” (farm to school extension agent) positions that are necessary for achieving the vision of thriving agricultural systems across Hawai‘i that are an integral part of our communities (see graphic on page 4 of the [report](#)).

Requested amendments to SB666 include:

1. Change “Kauai” to “Molokai”, so that the existing position on Molokai is sustained.
2. ***FOR EQUITABLE SYSTEM-WIDE PROGRESS ON FARM TO SCHOOL:*** Fund at least 1-2 farm to school extension agent positions per HIDOE District (10 total positions), as follows:
 1. Leeward Oahu
 2. Windward Oahu
 3. Central Oahu
 4. Honolulu
 5. East Hawaii
 6. West Hawaii
 7. Molokai
 8. West Maui & Lanai
 9. Central & East Maui
 10. Kauai

Such investment by the State of Hawai‘i will bring to fruition the transformative power of farm to school and agriculture education for all students and school communities across our beloved pae ‘āina.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify.

Aloha,

Lydi Morgan Bernal

SB-666

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 10:09:54 AM

Testimony for HRE on 1/30/2025 3:05:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Redfeather	Testifying for Ka Ohana O Na Pua	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- These positions are essential to advance a coordinated statewide approach to offering all students daily access to agriculture and food systems education.
- Increasing access to quality education will advance Hawai'i's food security and food self-sufficiency through the development of agriculture educators and future farmers.
- These positions will help meet the purposes of the ACT 175 Hawaii farm-to-school program, farm-to-school coordinator. (a) A Hawaii farm-to-school program has been established within the department.

LATE

SB-666

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 12:47:03 PM

Testimony for HRE on 1/30/2025 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Monica Esquivel	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Esteemed Policy makers,

I am writing to request your support for SB666 that will provide our state with the necessary capacity to increase access food systems, agriculture, and nutrition education to Hawaii's youth. Specifically, the 2 farm to school positions requested are already temporarily funded by CTAHR and making great strides in improving farm to school programming and ag education on Oahu and Molokai. By making funding for these positions permanent, funds can be freed up to accelerate and expand to offer farm to school programming for additional communities. The farm to school activities are well established and successful, supporting their permanence is a logical next step.

Thank you

Monica Esquivel

Kaneohe Resident