

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HUI HO'OU LU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS
February 25, 2026
10:57 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 2320, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

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

The **Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC)** supports **S.B. 2320, SD1**, which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program to create clear, supported career pipelines in agriculture and agricultural technology. The bill appropriately directs the University of Hawai'i to collaborate closely with the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, ADC, the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and appropriate community-based organizations to develop and administer the program, with annual reporting to the Legislature.

Strong and sustained collaboration among these entities is essential to the success of this initiative. No single institution can independently build an effective agricultural workforce system. The University of Hawai'i provides research capacity, technical expertise, and credentialing pathways; the Department of Education connects secondary students to early exposure and career awareness; the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity ensures alignment with regulatory, plant health, and industry standards; ADC provides direct

connection to agricultural lands, infrastructure, and agribusiness operators; the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations aligns workforce development funding, labor market data, and apprenticeship systems; and community organizations ensure culturally grounded outreach, mentorship, and support services that increase student retention and participation. Coordinated governance and shared accountability across these partners will be critical to building durable pathways.

Hawai'i's ability to increase food production, strengthen climate resilience, and modernize agriculture depends on building a workforce pipeline that is visible, attainable, and aligned with real jobs—ranging from production agriculture and equipment operations to data-enabled irrigation, controlled environment agriculture, food processing, and ag-focused entrepreneurship. S.B. 2320, SD1, is well structured because it is collaborative by design and emphasizes supported pathways and credentialing—features consistently associated with durable workforce outcomes in other states.

Two comparable models demonstrate what sustained, structured pathways can produce:

Connecticut's Agricultural Science and Technology Education (ASTE) model—tracked through a required five-year graduate follow-up—shows strong workforce and postsecondary outcomes. In the Class of 2019 follow-up report submitted to the Connecticut State Board of Education, 97% of graduates were employed, with 32% working full-time in an agriculture-related field, and 11% serving in the armed forces. The same report found 91% obtained a postsecondary certificate, 60% earned a four-year degree, and 10% of graduates owned a business, collectively employing 38 individuals. The report also quantified hands-on, work-based learning impacts through Supervised Agricultural Experience projects, including student-generated income and documented community service and economic activity.

California's AgTech Alliance provides a relevant example of a statewide, hub-based approach to aligning innovation, workforce development, and industry

needs. The Alliance operates a statewide network of nine regional innovation hubs to accelerate technology adoption while building training pathways for students, farmworkers, and career changers. Its structure emphasizes field testing, startup support, and direct industry engagement to translate research into real-world farm applications. The California AgTech Alliance has placed more than 1,500 workers in long-term AgTech careers using robotics, drones, and precision agriculture technologies, attracted significant private investment, and launched more than 200 startups.

Hawai'i is well positioned to apply these lessons in a way that reflects local priorities: strengthening local food production, expanding ag-related career opportunities for residents statewide, improving farm viability through appropriate technology adoption, and supporting community resilience through a more modern and connected agricultural economy. S.B. 2320, SD1's, multi-agency design reflects the same elements that have produced results elsewhere: structured pathways, clearly defined institutional roles, cross-agency alignment, and accountability through annual reporting.

ADC strongly supports building a formal coordination framework among the University of Hawai'i, the Department of Education, the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, ADC, the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and community partners to ensure curriculum alignment, shared performance metrics, employer engagement, and integration with registered apprenticeships and workforce funding streams. This coordinated approach will prevent duplication, streamline implementation, and ensure that training programs directly match industry demand.

ADC commits to working collaboratively with partner agencies and the University of Hawai'i to help shape curriculum that directly serves the needs of Hawai'i's agribusiness and AgTech sectors. This includes ensuring that training aligns with real-world practices in land management, irrigation systems, food manufacturing, logistics, regulatory compliance, and applied agricultural technologies.

Equally important, ADC supports building meaningful, paid internships and registered apprenticeship opportunities that connect students with farms, food manufacturers, and AgTech employers across the State. These work-based learning opportunities are critical to keeping Hawai'i students in Hawai'i by providing clear pathways to local careers, reducing outmigration, and strengthening the agricultural workforce necessary to meet Hawai'i's food production and resilience goals.

For these reasons, ADC supports S.B. 2320, SD1, and appreciates the Legislature's leadership in advancing a collaborative, cross-agency framework that can build durable, locally rooted pathways into agriculture and AgTech careers for Hawai'i's future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



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 Ways and Means
Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 10:57 a.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience
and
Vassilis Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2320 SD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 2320 SD1 relating to Agriculture which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program to create career pipelines in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology. Requires the University of Hawai'i (UH) to collaborate with the Department of Education (DOE), Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB), Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC), Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR), and appropriate community organizations to develop and administer the program. Require reports to the Legislature and appropriates funds.

In 2024, University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) leadership and faculty engaged in college-wide strategic planning to advance Hawai'i's agriculture, build local self-sufficiency, boosting selective exports of value-added products, preparing the agricultural workforce, improving ecosystem health, and promoting community prosperity and wellbeing. One of the priority focus areas for CTAHR was workforce development to attract new generations to agriculture through innovative education, training, and support programs that create a formal pipeline that connects Hawai'i's high school and community college students to CTAHR and ultimately to the local agricultural workforce. CTAHR has collaborated with DOE about its efforts involving early college credits through the CTAHR Summer Research Institute and specific introductory courses such as Introduction to Natural Resources and Environment (NREM 192) and Agriculture, Environment and Society (TPSS 200). A recent focus with workforce readiness is CTAHR's 3-year degree which will involve learning by doing through practical, hands-on-training and creating experiential learning opportunities connecting students with producers at its Waimānalo, Kapa'a, Kula, Waimea, and Kona CARES centers as regional hubs in every county. CTAHR is also collaborating with DOE on professional development for educators and to create online micro credentials to keep Ag-educators updated on new technologies; and developing

programs for farm managers and agricultural professions. CTAHR has the instructional expertise in GIS and remote sensing, drone operations and other AI technology, and agricultural engineering for best management practices and reduction of costs of production.

CTAHR supports the State's food security and economic diversification goals and is committed to its continuous collaboration with DOE, DAB, ADC, DLIR, UH School of Hawaiian Knowledge and other community organizations with assisting students and agricultural entrepreneurs learn, thrive, and be culturally informed. The appropriation in SB 2320 SD1 will support statewide community assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/25/2026

Time: 10:57 AM

Location: CR 211 & Videoconference

Committee: WAM

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB2320, SD1, RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program to create career pipelines in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology. Requires the University of Hawaii to collaborate with the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Agribusiness Development Corporation, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and appropriate community organizations to develop and administer the program. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) offers comments on SB 2320, SD 1, which establishes a Kuleana Agtech Pathways Program designed to cultivate a skilled, culturally grounded, and resilient agricultural workforce for Hawai'i.

The Department recognizes the need to strengthen the pipeline to the agriculture workforce to support Hawai'i's goal to be self-sustaining and understands the value of integrating Native Hawaiian agriculture, regenerative practices, aquaculture, agroforestry, and entrepreneurship to foster a workforce that is both technically proficient and deeply connected to Hawai'i's culture. The Department remains committed to working with the University of Hawai'i (UH); the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity; the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism and its Agribusiness Development Corporation; the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations; and community stakeholder groups to design work-based learning opportunities in authentic workplace settings and to ensure the curriculum and instruction delivered in the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources career pathway is aligned with current and emerging industry standards and practices.

The components of the Kuleana Agtech Pathways Program provided in Section 2(c) aligns with the Department's efforts to prepare students for the current and future agriculture workforce, including instruction in agricultural technology (agtech), professional development for educators, and student internship opportunities.

Partnering with UH to offer high school students dual credit courses and certificate programs in agriculture and agtech and to establish agtech regional hubs to provide students with hands-on, community-based educational activities will advance student learning and promote the desired pipeline to workforce.

The Department defers to the University of Hawai'i regarding the establishment and implementation of the Kuleana Agtech Pathways Program outlined in Section 2.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure and for your continued support in the Department's workforce development efforts.



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2320 SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Ki‘ina Hana a me nā Kumuwaiwai
(Senate Committee on Ways and Means)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Pepeluali 25, 2026

10:57 AM

Lumi 211

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB2320 SD1**, which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program in the University of Hawai‘i system to strengthen Hawai‘i’s agriculture workforce through culturally grounded, island-based career pathways that begin in high school and continue into post-secondary education and employment.

The provisions of **SB2320 SD1** are consistent with OHA’s prior work recognizing that cultivating new farmers requires sustained, mentored pathways rather than short-term exposure. The Taro Security and Purity Task Force’s 2010 report, prepared with community input statewide and supported by OHA, emphasized that “a taro farmer is not created in a single semester or class,” and encouraged linked classroom and field opportunities that allow learners to carry credits across programs and build a full track of study.¹ The Task Force further recommended expanding agricultural and cultural apprenticeships and mentorships that place learners with experienced farmers for meaningful durations, noting that short-term apprenticeships can be inefficient for farmers because of the time and attention required to train participants.²

This measure’s dual-credit structure to allow early access to resources by high school students, internship/apprenticeship opportunities, and high school career and technical education components directly align with these recommendations and provide a

¹ Taro Security and Purity Task Force, *E ola hou ke kalo; ho‘i hou ka ‘āina lē‘ia: 2010 Legislative Report* (Dec. 29, 2009), at 62.

² Id. and n.101

framework to normalize long-term mentorship and practice-based learning within public education systems. The Task Force Report also called for developing a pipeline of youth education programs, scholarships, internships, and apprenticeships to “grow” new farmers within local communities, and for establishing career or study tracks in Hawaiian agriculture within the university system.³ This measure advances that infrastructure by starting early, reducing barriers, and connecting students to real farm settings and credentialed pathways.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. For these reasons, OHA respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS SB2320 SD1**.

³ Taro Security and Purity Task Force, *2010 Legislative Report*, at 48.



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February 25, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2320, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
10:57 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 2320, SD1, which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program within the University of Hawai'i to expand agricultural science and technology career pathways across the State.

Hawai'i's agricultural industry faces ongoing workforce shortages and an aging farmer population. Developing clear and structured pathways for students to enter agricultural careers is essential to ensuring the long-term viability of local food production and biosecurity efforts. Strengthening coordination between public schools, the University of Hawai'i system, and industry partners will help build a skilled workforce prepared for the evolving needs of modern agriculture.

Agriculture today requires knowledge of technology, resource management, business planning, and environmental stewardship. Providing students with hands-on training, internship opportunities, dual-credit pathways, and exposure to emerging agricultural technologies will better align education with real-world workforce demands. Programs that integrate classroom learning with practical farm experience help students see agriculture as a viable and innovative career choice.

HFB supports efforts that create statewide consistency while allowing regional flexibility to address the unique agricultural characteristics of each island. Partnerships between educators, producers, and industry stakeholders will be critical to ensure that training programs reflect actual workforce needs.

SB 2320, SD1 represents a positive investment in the next generation of farmers, ranchers, agricultural technicians, and biosecurity professionals. Building a strong agricultural workforce pipeline strengthens Hawai'i's food security and economic resilience.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



SB 2320 SD1– RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

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

The Local Food Coalition **supports** SB 2320 SD1, which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Pilot Program to create career pipelines in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i, Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Agribusiness Development Corporation, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and appropriate community organizations.

Hawai'i's small and mid-scale farmers continue to face persistent workforce shortages that limit their capacity to expand production and meet growing local demand. SB 2320 SD1 addresses this challenge by establishing statewide, culturally grounded pathways that prepare Hawai'i's youth for meaningful careers in agriculture.

By integrating internships and apprenticeships, regional agtech hubs, dual-credit opportunities, and training in climate-smart and technology-driven practices, the measure helps cultivate the next generation of farmers, technicians, and agricultural innovators. The regional hub model will also strengthen the links between students and the local farmers who need skilled workers today.

The Local Food Coalition is an organization comprised of farmers, ranchers, livestock producers, investors, and other stakeholders united by a shared commitment to building a robust and self-sufficient food system for Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 10:57AM

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

RE: SB2320 SD1 Relating to Agriculture

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

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports Senate Bill 2320 SD1 (SB2320 SD1), which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program to create career pipelines in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology.

SB2320 SD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillars for Economic Action and 21st Century Agriculture. This bill supports these pillars by establishing county specific agricultural science and technology pathways extending from high school to early career. This regional approach to workforce development improves and modernizes opportunity for employment within the agricultural sector, which struggles with an aging workforce. State support for programming such as KAPP is crucial for empowering students with modern, high demand workforce skills while providing opportunity for application in a food systems context. Grounding this training and development in a sector as vital as agriculture will improve Hawaii's food system resilience, modernize the sector, and create opportunity for innovation.

Allowing regional input for this program also aligns with the Chamber of Commerce Sector Partnerships program, dedicated to building workforce pipelines around industry needs. This bill acknowledges the regional agricultural differences across the state and gives agency to these regions in organizing these talent pipelines around their needs. Such considerations are enabled by engagement with all the partner organizations listed in the bills language and will optimize the investments and intent of this bill.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass Senate Bill 2320 SD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

February 23, 2026

To: Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki, and the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Subject: **SB2320 SD1**, Relating to Agriculture

Aloha,

My name is Sydney Haas and I am a farmer in Hale'iwa. **I am writing in support of SB2320 SD1**, which establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program that will create career pipelines in agriculture and agriculture tech. Not only could this bill help provide career opportunities in these fields, but it can also help create means to revitalize Hawai'i's agriculture economy.

Between 2017 and 2022, the number of farms in Hawai'i declined by over 10%, and the average farmer age now exceeds 60. The reduction in the number of farms is troubling as Hawai'i remains dependent on imports to feed our communities, and therefore is also vulnerable to disruptions in the supply chain when faced with economic or environmental disasters. Without effective and organized pathways for younger generations to enter agriculture, we risk continued weakening of local agricultural production and food system resiliency.

SB2320 SD1 addresses this challenge by:

- Expanding agricultural science and technology into high school and UH Career and Technical Education programs.
- Training students in high-demand skills such as GIS, drone operations, climate-smart farming, and agricultural data systems.
- Creating internships, apprenticeships, and dual-credit opportunities with local farms and businesses.
- Establishing regional AgTech hubs aligned with each county's needs.

I urge the committee to pass SB2320 SD1 to establish the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program. This program bridges cultural stewardship with modern agricultural tools, preparing the next generation to care for the 'āina while strengthening Hawai'i's food security and workforce resilience. The model would provide an opportunity to perpetuate, and transform, traditional Hawaiian agricultural knowledge across generations while prioritizing the needs of both 'āina and community.

Mahalo to the committees for the opportunity to testify,

Sydney Haas

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

February 25, 2026

To: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Date: Wednesday, February 25, 2026
Time: 10:57 a.m.
Place: Conference Room 211, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: S.B. 2320 SD1 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

The **DLIR supports** this measure provided it does not conflict with the priorities identified in the Governor's Executive Supplemental Budget request. DLIR will defer to the University of Hawaii (UH) as the lead agency on internal implementation matters and bill language should the measure continue through the legislative process.

The department notes growing student interest in agricultural careers and hopes this measure will provide the catalyst to expand agricultural science and technology education at both the college and high school levels.

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

SB-2320-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 7:07:49 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/25/2026 10:57:00 AM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!!

SB-2320-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 10:51:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/25/2026 10:57:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

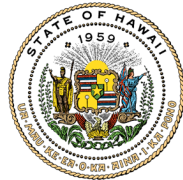
Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2320 SB RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
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SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

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

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026
10:57 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 211 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2320, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testify on Senate Bill No. 2320, SD1 relating to agriculture. This measure establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Pilot Program to create career pipelines in the fields of agriculture and agricultural technology; requires the University of Hawaii to collaborate with the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department), Agribusiness Development Corporation, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and appropriate community organizations to develop and administer the program; requires reports to the Legislature; appropriates funds; and is effective 7/1/2050. The Department supports this measure.

The Department believes that any measure that creates clear pathways into careers in agriculture and agriculture technology are critical to ensuring food security and biosecurity for the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

SB-2320-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 9:34:26 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/25/2026 10:57:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
chanel wong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I fully support SB 2320 and the Kuleana Actech educationa pipeline. It is necessary, it is long overdue, and it opens up pathways for students to not only maintain careers but better sociey and communities through their work.

Mahalo nui,

Chanel Wong

Testimony on SB2320 S.D.1

Relating to Agriculture

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

My name is Carlin Rose McFadden. I serve as a Lead Advocate in Civic Engagement with Hawai'i Food+ Policy at Purple Mai'a Foundation, and I am the author of the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program reflected in SB2320 S.D.1. I respectfully offer strong support for this measure.

SB2320 S.D.1 establishes the Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program within the University of Hawai'i system to create a coordinated, statewide pipeline into agricultural and agricultural technology careers. This bill addresses a structural workforce challenge facing Hawai'i's food system.

Hawai'i imports the majority of its food while maintaining one of the oldest farming populations in the nation. At the same time, modern agriculture increasingly requires technical competencies in geospatial analysis, drone operations, climate-smart systems, water management, soil monitoring, and agricultural data management. Employers report difficulty recruiting locally trained workers with these combined technical and place-based skills.

Currently, Hawai'i has individual components of workforce development:

- Career and Technical Education programs
- University agriculture and natural resource programs
- Farm-based internships
- Workforce development initiatives

However, these systems operate largely in silos. Students often lack visibility into agricultural career pathways, and employers lack structured coordination for mentorship and workforce entry.

SB2320 S.D.1 fills that coordination gap.

The bill requires collaboration among the University of Hawai'i, the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Agribusiness Development Corporation, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and community partners. It establishes county-aligned regional hubs to reflect agricultural differences across islands. It formalizes dual credit pathways, structured internships and apprenticeships, tiered certifications, and training in GIS, drone operations, climate-smart agriculture, and agricultural data systems.

Importantly, the appropriation in this measure supports backbone infrastructure, not duplication.

Funding is directed toward:

- Program coordination across agencies and counties
- Educator professional development and curriculum alignment
- Shared technical equipment and training resources
- Compensated internships to ensure equitable access
- Regional hub administration aligned to county needs

Without dedicated coordination capacity, existing programs remain fragmented. With investment, Hawai‘i builds durable workforce infrastructure.

This is a fiscally responsible investment.

Workforce development reduces long-term recruitment costs for employers, retains local talent, strengthens in-state economic multipliers, and builds technical capacity that supports both agriculture and disaster resilience planning. The same geospatial and systems competencies used in precision agriculture are also used in emergency response, land management, and infrastructure planning.

Other states have demonstrated that structured agricultural pathway systems increase industry placement and long-term workforce stability. SB2320 S.D.1 adapts proven regional hub and supervised work-based learning models into a Hawai‘i-specific framework grounded in our geography and cultural stewardship values.

This bill does not create a new standalone agency. It strengthens coordination among existing institutions to ensure students can move seamlessly from exposure to credential to employment.

KAPP is a strategic investment in people as infrastructure.

By cultivating locally trained agricultural and agtech professionals, Hawai‘i strengthens food security, workforce resilience, and economic stability.

Mahalo for your time and consideration. I respectfully urge your support of SB2320 S.D.1.

Mahalo,

Carlin McFadden