UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
ʻŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAIʻI

Legislative Testimony
Hōʻike Manaʻo I Mua O Ka ʻAhaʻōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
Wednesday, March 25, 2026 at 2:10 p.m.
By
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SB 2320 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 2320 SD1 HD1 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 Hawaiʻi (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 Hawaiʻi College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) leadership and faculty engaged in college-wide strategic planning to advance Hawaiʻi'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 Hawaiʻi'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, Kapaʻa, 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 HD1 will support statewide community assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.