

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
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2025
10:02 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 211**

**SENATE BILL NO. 865 SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 865 SD1 that appropriates funds to establish a permanent Educational Support Associate position within the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience's Kona Cooperative Extension.

The Department of Agriculture supports this bill. The CTAHR Kona Extension Office has assisted and contributed to the success of the coffee industry in addition to their support of other specialty crops and livestock grown and raised in the area. Additional staff such as an Educational Support Associate will add a needed resource to the work of the Office.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony Hō‘ike Mana‘o I Mua O Ka ‘Aha‘olelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at 10:02 a.m.

By
Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience
And
Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

SB 865 SD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the intent of SB 865 SD1 relating to Agriculture that appropriates funds to establish a permanent Educational Support Associate position within the University of Hawai‘i (UH) College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience’s (CTAHR) Kona Cooperative Extension.

Coffee has emerged as an important cash crop for growers in Hawai‘i. It has also become an important export commodity boosting Hawai‘i’s economy. CTAHR conducts research and provides research-based information to increase coffee production in the state and improve the economic viability of growers. Although coffee research plots exist at multiple CTAHR stations, CTAHR’s Agricultural Research and Extension Station (CARES) in Kona currently has the sole Extension Agent engaged in applied research and outreach on coffee. Sustainability of coffee production is threatened by the Coffee Leaf Rust and Coffee Berry Borer and additional research and Extension capacity is needed to support the coffee industry throughout the state.

We strongly support the intent of this bill, and respectfully offer comments that it would be advantageous to have an Extension Agent position rather than an APT (Administrative, Professional and Technical) staff position that focuses on coffee, and other orchard crops with export potential such as macadamia nuts, cacao and tea to meet the needs of coffee and other orchard crops growers in the region and statewide.

We strongly support the intent of SB 865 SD1 with comments, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 19, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

**TESTIMONY ON SB 865, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
10:02 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 865, SD1, which appropriates funds to establish a permanent Educational Support Associate position within the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience's Kona Cooperative Extension.

The excellent work performed by UH CTAHR for Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers cannot be overstated. The ongoing outreach and education are unparalleled in the State. Farmers and ranchers rely on this program for their success. CTAHR has helped develop and improve agricultural technologies pertinent to Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers. This includes intensive cover crop research, promoting the importance of locally grown produce, developing biological and cultural methods for controlling pests without chemicals, and the use of biological nitrogen fixation to significantly increase the production of high protein foods while at the same time reducing the need for commercially produced fertilizers.

An Educational Support Associate will provide support to CTAHR's Kona Extension Faculty who provide support for farmers and ranchers that produce coffee, macadamia nut, avocado, and other tropical fruits, and livestock, as well as assisting with coffee leaf rust and coffee berry borer, two-lined spittlebug, tree pruning, grafting, propagation, organic and conventional pesticides, and nematode management.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important subject.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 9:50:48 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Koontz	Testifying for Konaloha Farms	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

UH-CTAHR and Tommy Greenwell have been the main resources that farmers go to with their questions. It is imperative that we coffee growers continue to be informed with the latest information on pests, techniques, processing, and anything else pertaining to our livelihood. The benefits of having another knowledgeable person there for the 700+ coffee farmers, along with the other farmers, far outweigh the cost. Please show your support for this bill. Mahalo!

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 5:18:59 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Love	Testifying for hawaii tropical fruit growers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senator Dela Cruz, Senator Moriwaki, and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Ken Love and I am the Executive Director of the Hawaii Tropical Fruit Growers. I write to you in SUPPORT of SB865 which appropriates funding to establish a permanent Educational Support Associate (APT) position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension in support of the coffee, mac nut, and tropical fruit industries.

This position is needed to support the only extension agent who serves these extremely important crops that help to feed our state and contribute over \$80 million to Hawaii's economy, farmers and communities. I emphasize that this position is NEEDED NOW when the agent's extension program is challenged to support the industries with devastating pests and diseases such as avocado lace bug, coffee leaf rust, coffee berry borer, macadamia felted coccid, Queensland longhorn beetle, anthracnose, phytophthora, etc.

I urge you to strongly support SB865 by funding this bill on Wednesday so that services are not interrupted during this critical time. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ken Love

Executive Director

Hawaii Tropical Fruit Growers

PO Box 1162

Captain Cook, HI 96704

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 3:56:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sharlene Gee	Testifying for Bea's Knees Farm	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a Kona coffee farmer and a Kona Coffee Farmers Association member testifying in strong support of SB865, pertaining to an educational support associate position for coffee, etc. For years I have taken advantage of workshops, classes and field days, in-person and sometimes Zoom, to learn more about coffee pruning, nutrients, and dealing with coffee pests and diseases, established (beetle) and new (coffee leaf rust). The e-newsletter that is sent out is critical, my most valuable resource for staying abreast with the latest pertaining to coffee. It's timely, trusted, valuable information. I save them all and often reference them. It was very valuable to have the support staff fill in while the County Extension Agent was out on maternity leave. The workshops and field days have been better by having additional support, as well. Please fund this position.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 2:09:07 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Kimo Falconer	Testifying for Hawaii Coffee Growers Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwake and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing in Strong Support of SB 865 SD1. Our coffee industry relies on the educational outreach as well as research activities provided by the Kona Extension Service office. The list of service items this entity gives to our farmers already far exceeds their capacity, and what they provide is frankly not available anywhere else.

They are asking for an educational assistant position to assist the one full time person currently doing everything. This small assistance pales in comparison to the total valuation of the crops and industry they are tasked with helping. I write to you as President of the Hawaii Coffee Growers Association, who represents over 70% of the coffee growing acreage in the State. We are one industry among many others asking for your help.

Please help move this measure forward.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 11:30:01 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Bateman	Testifying for Heavenly Hawaiian Farms	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

Heavenly Hawaiian Farms, Holualoa, **strongly supports** SB865 SD1.

We started farming coffee over 20 years ago. CTAHR, Kona Research and Extension Center, has been our close ag/science partner for all these years. Everyone starting out here with any fruit or crop farming operation needs a government sponsored agency to educate and help with sage, reliable and knowledgeable advice about crop diseases, pests, and related farming issues. CTAHR provides that valuable advice for the farmer. We need them! CTAHR Extension staff have been running on inadequate budgets and staffing for years. They need help now. Our industry needs them. With over 1,100 coffee farms statewide and a coffee farm gate estimated at over \$70,000,000, and with many farmers survival at stake, funding this one additional research position at CTAHR is a very small state investment with a very large Return on Investment (ROI) for the coffee farming industry, related jobs for our local residents.and the State of Hawaii

We **strongly support** SB865 SD1 and ask for your votes in favor to pass this bill out of Committee.

Mahalo nui,

Dave Bateman, President

Heavenly Hawaiian Farms

Holualoa HI

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 12:17:10 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorie Obra	Testifying for Rusty's Hawaiian	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

IN SUPPORT OF SB 865
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE
UH; CTAHR; Position; Establishment; Kona Cooperative Extension; Appropriations (\$)

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

As co-founder of Rusty's Hawaiian, an award-winning coffee farm, mill and roastery in the Ka'u District on Hawai'i Island, I am very much in favor of SB 865. The proposed educational support associate position at CTAHR would provide vital assistance to our current extension agent. This additional position is crucial for maintaining and expanding the level of service that Hawai'i's coffee farmers need to remain competitive and sustainable.

Hawai'i's coffee industry faces challenges from two devastating threats: Coffee Berry Borer (CBB), one of the world's most destructive coffee pests, and Coffee Leaf Rust (CLR), one of the most severe diseases affecting coffee plants globally. However, we rely on just one extension agent who must also cover macadamia nuts and other orchard crops. This situation is severely inadequate for supporting Hawai'i's diverse and growing coffee industry.

I can tell you firsthand about the importance of CTAHR's extension program. Over the years, its agents' expertise has been instrumental in advising me and other farmers on essential aspects of coffee cultivation, including planting, pruning, nutrition, and disease management. The success of my farming operation owes a great deal to the advice we receive from CTAHR. With the sobering realities of CBB and CLR, we need help from CTAHR more than ever.

Given the cutbacks in grants at the federal level, it's critical that the State fund this permanent educational support associate position. I urge you to advance SB 865 and help farmers increase access to the technical guidance we need to thrive.

Sincerely,
Lorie Obra

Co-founder
Rusty's Hawaiian
Ka'u District, Hawai'i Island

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 12:40:06 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Una Greenaway	Testifying for Kuaiwi farm	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Gabbard and Vice Chair Richards;

As a long time coffee farmer in the Kona district, I am pleading with you to pass this bill. We coffee farmers have been bombarded with pests and diseases. We desperately need this extra position to serve the coffee community, and the other crops like cacao, mac nuts, etc. As you know we may lose Federal funding, so it is vital to get our state's help to save our heritage crops.

Mahalo

Una Greenaway

Kuaiwi farm

Kealakekua

808-936-0864

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2025 3:13:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Miles Mayne	Testifying for Kau Coffee Growers Cooperative	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We, the Kau Coffee Growers Cooperative, are writing to advocate for the funding of SB865 for a full-time extension associate at the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) dedicated to the coffee and orchard crops industries in Hawai‘i. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Hawai‘i is home to **1,111 coffee farms** covering a total acreage of **9,422 acres**. Coffee has consistently ranked among the top five commodities in the state and is currently ranked **3rd** compared to Macadamia Nut, which is ranked **7th**.

Despite the significant presence and economic importance of coffee farming in Hawai‘i, the resources dedicated to this industry are disproportionately low compared to other agricultural sectors. Currently, there is only **one extension agent** assigned to the coffee and orchard crops industries, while floriculture and ornamentals have **five agents**, and livestock has **three agents**. This disparity highlights the urgent need for additional support to ensure the sustainability and growth of the coffee and orchard crops industries.

In spite of coffee being the third most important commodity in the state, historically, the resources allocated to the extension agents at CTAHR have been based on a "grant-funded basis." Grants are typically awarded for specific projects and come with strict guidelines, making the position of a dedicated coffee extension agent highly precarious. This practice has also led to these resources being redistributed to other universities and entities by a local grant Project Director.

Consequently, this reduces the ability of CTAHR to provide substantial and continuous outreach for coffee farmers. It is also worth noting that the sustainable and organic industries have a full-time, permanent extension support staff whose position was funded through regular budget allocations by the Ways and Means Committee. These allocations are more stable and flexible, ensuring continuous support. Given the current uncertainties with staff reductions being pursued by Federal Government of its agencies, we request that the resources in our State are protected by legislative action and that our extension services provided by CTAHR are insulated from unforeseen events.

Investing in a full-time extension associate for the coffee and orchard crops industries will not only benefit individual farmers but also contribute to the overall economic health of the state. By enhancing the productivity and sustainability of these farms, we can ensure a stable supply of high-quality coffee, which is a significant export commodity for Hawai‘i.

In conclusion, the funding of a full-time, permanent extension associate at CTAHR's Kona Extension Office dedicated to the coffee and orchard crops industries is a critical step towards supporting the growth and sustainability of this vital sector. I urge you to consider this request and provide the necessary resources to ensure the continued success of Hawai‘i's coffee industry.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 7:24:42 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Trump	Testifying for Island Harvest Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a second generation macadamia farmer working for Island Harvest writing in support of SB895. Island Harvest manages over 500 acres of orchard crops on the Island of Hawai‘i. Orchard crops generate well over \$100 million dollars of revenue each year in the state, yet extension and research support for farmers is minimal due to the lack of adequate funding of positions at CTAHR. We ask that this bill be passed to support research and extension at CTAHR, and in turn, help our farmers.

Mahalo,

Andrew

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 7:41:01 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
sharon mees	Testifying for Kai Ikena Orchards	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a small food crop farmer it is of great importance that funding for full time educational support is provided.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 7:56:25 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Benjamin Vanegtern	Testifying for Puna Chocolate	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

As co-owner of Puna Chocolate company and UH Manoa graduate I'm in full support of SB865. We greatly rely on the extension to provide quality and up to date information and research in our 50+ employee company. We have used the offices information and support to keep our farms and processing centers moving forward when it comes to information on new pesticide applications, proper pruning techniques, invasive pest control, employee safety and health standards that we would have to search out elsewhere if we did not have this reliable and trustworthy source. We have been working with over 100 other farmers and growers across Hawaii Island and have directed them as well to the extension to get information that we can not supply on an every day basis while also continuing our own operations. Those growers and producers don't have to rely on expensive consultants to get the needed information to increase production or to keep their crops healthy throughout our growing seasons. It's the extension and the programs and information that they produce through research that the agriculture community heavily relies upon to keep our own aina and ohana safe and healthy and decreasing our dependence on out of state food security. Mahalo!

LATE

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 11:21:36 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bill Dwyer	Testifying for Hawaii Coffee Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We strongly support this bill.

Testimony for SB865 – Support

February 17, 2025



To:
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Aloha e Committee,

I am testifying in favor of SB865.

There are more farms growing coffee in Hawai'i than any other crop. It is a crop that forms part of Hawai'i's agricultural identity and one that provides economic opportunities in the state and significant agricultural income for the state (it is one of the highest valued crops in the state, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/Ag_Overview/stateOverview.php?state=HAWAII).

As there is now but one extension agent supporting coffee- at a time when growing coffee is more challenging than ever before- providing support to that agent is essential.

Please, pass this bill.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shawn Steiman".

Shawn Steiman, PhD.
Author, The Hawai'i Coffee Book: A Gourmet's Guide From Kona to Kaua'i
Owner, Coffea Consulting
Owner, Grok Coffee

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 9:38:04 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jim Monk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony by James A Monk in support of SB865

SB865 (and HB500) appropriate funding for one permanent, full-time Educational Support Associate (APT) position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension to provide support for the coffee and orchard crops extension and applied research program. This permanent, full-time educational support position described in SB865 will greatly help the coffee industry to be supported at a higher capacity. If this bill does not pass it is likely there will be a reduction in the services to the coffee industry and other important Hawaiian agricultural crops due to a loss in staff. Please support the passage of SB865.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 10:39:50 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
melissa wheeler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our coffee industry is critical to overall health of our economy! This type of research and outreach is neccesary to the continued growth of that economy and more full time educators are essential! Please support this bill!!

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 11:26:02 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Shultise	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support this bill.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 1:03:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debbie Donald	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a small coffee farmer with nearly 20 years experience farming in Kona, I can state that without the assistance from our ag advisors I could not keep my farm. The agents, both of them, have helped me on many occasions and are the reason I can continue to farm in spite of all of the pests on this island.

I urge you to support this position as a single person doing all of the work is not going to be nearly as valuable to all of the farmers.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 1:48:30 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Ripp	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a long term volunteer in native gardening and farming I urge you to pass SB865.

There is no greater joy than to see the light of knowledge turn on in an individual - especially the young and as rewarding in one who just became a life long ag learner.

We desperately need to educate and arm our growers, of anything close to the food chain, on best practices and sustainability of crops.

The returns will be beyond measure.

thank you very much for working for our future, food sufficient generations.

Robert F Ripp

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 3:57:30 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stacey Himmel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I have a small farm in So. Kona and I am the sole owner. I recently contacted the Dept of Agriculture as my Sharwil avocado trees are infested with a mite that will cause the trees to lose all their leaves and stop producing fruit.

I needed a professional to look at the trees to determine how I ought handle the situation. It took a few weeks to connect with Matt Miahara at the Kona Extension office, but eventually he was able to visit my farm and make an assessment. His service is invaluable and in the past, I have called on the department multiple times when such cases arise. There are so many pests it's hard to keep up particularly when one doesn't choose to use heavy pesticides and insecticides.

in these times it's vital to support the organizations that support farmers who are supplying the islands food producers.

Please support this bill! It's important.

Stacey Himmel

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2025 8:54:34 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bobbie Becker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to ask that you support SB865, the bill that would fund one permanent, full-time Educational Support Associate (APT) position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension office. There is a person who is already trained and in the role as a temporary associate. By approving this bill the office would have two permanent positions for experts to assist the coffee and mac nut growers in our islands. Given that the Hawaiian coffee industry faces significant new challenges due to the arrival of Coffee Borer Beetle and Coffee Leaf Rust to our islands in the past few years the need for information and support in how to manage these threats has increased significantly.

As a Maui coffee farmer, I rely on the educational workshops and programs that are available through CTAR. Please SUPPORT Hawaiian agriculture by funding this second full time position.

Mahalo,

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2025 1:25:51 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cynthia Maryanoff	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It's decision time! The Ways and Means (WAM) Committee has the ability to fund Senate Bill 865. We strongly support SB86. Please fund SB86!

SB865 (and HB500) appropriates funding for one permanent, full-time Educational Support Associate (APT) position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension to provide support to coffee and orchard crops extension and applied research program. This permanent, full-time educational support association position described in SB865 will greatly help to serve farmers at a higher capacity while not letting us down because of a reduction in services due to a loss in staff.

Every time there is an emergency [CBB, CLR] UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension responded with education and support and our crops had minimal loss IF WE FOLLOWED WHAT UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension TAUGHT US! WE NEED THEM! Many farms are tiny farms that count on UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension! Please support SB865 (and HB500).

Sincerely

Cynthia A Maryanoff

Absolute Palate LLC

AbsolutelyKona.com

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2025 3:15:47 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Harry Bittenbender	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB865 to create a permanent associate educational specialist position at the Kona Extension Office in College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience, University of Hawaii at Manoa. The associate educational specialist would join as permanent staff an already high functioning team led by the extension agent that needs additional educational support. Kona Extension Office has great need to address the educational challenge prompted by the recent arrival of the two most serious coffee pest and disease- coffee berry borer and coffee leaf.

Successful biocontrol methods have been identified. The educational effort with Big Island and coffee farmers on other islands to manage these problems is now the challenge. The associate educational specialist will assist the Kona extension agent who has additional responsibility for extension education for macadamia and tropical fruit farmers on the Big Island.

H.C 'Skip' Bittenbender, PhD

Retired CTAHR, UHM State-wide Specialist for Coffee, Cacao and Kava

Chair Dela Cruz and Vice Chair Moriwaki, my name is Jensen Uyeda. I am submitting testimony as an individual supporting bill SB865 appropriating funds to establish a permanent Educational Support Associate Position for CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension. I currently serve as a CTAHR Extension Agent on Oahu, working with edible crops, and I understand Cooperative Extension's vital role in our communities.

Cooperative Extension is key in disseminating science-based information through non-traditional educational programs to the agricultural community. The Kona extension programs service the coffee industry on Hawaii Island and throughout the state. This industry is one of the highest grossing agricultural industries, estimated at over \$48 Million. Over the last few years, this industry has been hammered with production challenges such as coffee berry borer (CBB) and coffee leaf rust (CLR), potentially reducing yields and increasing production costs. The educational programs provided to the industry by the Kona Extension programs have been vital to growers' success in overcoming these challenges. The program's capacity is limited, with only one extension agent and a temporary grant-funded educational support associate. If a permanent position is funded, the extension program will increase the ability to prioritize research and educational projects throughout the state. It will also increase the program's capacity to manage the Kona research station, where much of the research is being done to identify strategies to mitigate the problems brought on by CBB and CLR.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

TESTIMONY OF STUART T. NAKAMOTO
Extension Economist/Specialist at UH-CTAHR

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

FEBRUARY 19, 2025
310:02 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 211

SENATE BILL NO. 865
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 865. My name is Stuart T. Nakamoto. I am an Extension Economist/Specialist at the UH-CTAHR however I am testifying on my own behalf and not the CTAHR. I strongly support SB865.

The reasons enumerated in the measure explain the rationale behind this request and the economic benefits of the coffee industry to the state. I would like to elaborate on some points.

The bill references a crop value of \$48.2 million, which is right after harvest at the farmgate. When value is added by further processing to green coffee (the stage before roasting) that crop is worth over \$67 million, while still at Hawaii agricultural operations. This revenue supports producers, their families, and their communities. Very importantly, coffee contributes much to the visitor industry and Hawaii's economy.

All with one agent.

I humbly ask that you support Senate Bill 865.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2025 9:33:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruth Love	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Having assistance with and through the agricultural extension office of University of Hilo, CTAHR especially for our coffee producers and their fight against coffee borer and rust is very necessary.

Thank you

Mrs Ruth Love

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 11:17:15 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrea Kawabata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 17, 2025

Dear Senator Dela Cruz, Senator Moriwaki, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Andrea Kawabata and I am an Extension Agent for Coffee and Orchard Crops with UH-CTAHR's Kona Research and Extension Center in Kealakekua, HI. I write to you as an individual and community member of Hawaii **in strong support of SB865**.

SB865 and HB500 appropriates funds to establish a permanent Educational Support Associate (APT) position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension - my place of work - and for the extension program that I manage. For the past two years this position has been requested, but now more than ever, **I am pleading to you to approve funding for this position THIS YEAR.**

As you may already know, an Extension Agent's program SOLELY (except for \$3,000 from CTAHR) depends on external funding to hire staff, purchase supplies to organize and conduct outreach events, travel to farms, conduct applied research, translate materials, participate in industry conferences, etc. For the past 12 years, I have employed at least one APT annually to support Extension projects that provide outreach to the state's #3 agricultural commodity - coffee - and to the tropical fruit industry and to a lesser extent, the macadamia nut (#7) industry. My current and past support staff have been 100% GRANT FUNDED and together, we have provided outreach statewide to over 1,110 COFFEE FARMS on more than 9,420 ACRES, and mac nut and tropical fruit growers in West Hawaii.

Since 2011, my program has brought in more than \$4.6 million in grant funding with other collaborators. My staff and I have conducted hundreds of workshops, webinars, and field day events statewide and I can tell you first-hand that a second person is critical for event set-up, moving tables, chairs, putting up and breaking down tents, traveling with multiple luggages filled with educational booth display items, posting flyers, interacting with growers during public events, creating a monthly newsletter, posting events and announcements online, sending reminders to participants, moderating the chat and muting participants during webinars, taking photos and videos, etc.

Through the years, and an example of our impact, we have helped coffee growers statewide develop and implement an IPM for coffee berry borer (CBB) control which has been successful at lowering CBB damage rates from 40% to less than 5% and keep farmers in business. We

provided outreach on coffee leaf rust (CLR) prior to its arrival and so when it was first found in Maui, we were able to help with its identification and published alerts, field guides, and sanitation and management recommendations immediately. We still have a lot of work to do with CLR, but are gaining ground as research results are provided to us to disseminate. Our own applied research projects have given coffee farmers additional tools for controlling CBB (Delegate WG, pruning, etc.), coffee root-knot nematode ('Meisner' rootstock, replant strategies, etc.), and CLR ('Ito' Catimor hybrid - the first vetted, CLR-resistant trees distributed to farmers, control recommendations, etc.). MUCH of this work would not be possible without staff support and NONE of it can be done without funding from at least THREE GRANT-FUNDED PROJECTS ANNUALLY.

With that said, **my program is in trouble**. Since 2021, my Extension program has been part of a USDA NIFA SCRI coffee leaf rust grant that was awarded over \$6 million for four years. This past November 2024 and without any personal communications from the project director, over \$260,000 from my (contracted) grant outreach budget was diverted and given to researchers at another university and other entities, leaving me with ZERO funding for the final period (9/1/24-8/31/25) of the grant. Because of this action by the PI, I now have over \$66,000+ in budget shortfall for CLR project expenses and a dedicated staff who I am desperately trying to keep employed - this is still true as of this testimonial letter. This \$260K hole in my budget is extremely painful and not only hurts my program and staff, but also our ability to provide the much needed support that Hawaii's farmers deserve. To address this loss of funds, I have already released staff and cut expenses. My next step is to reduce my final staff's position, cut output to growers because of their reduced time commitments, and pursue funding from competitive grants which is never guaranteed.

This APT position described in SB865 will not only support Hawaii's top agricultural commodities, but help my program focus on what's important - Hawaii's farming community. With this permanent APT position, we hope to mirror the UH-CTAHR [SOAP](#) program with their full-time, permanent APT provided by legislature in 2018 and be able to expand our program much like the landscape/ornamental/floriculture/potted plant industry has with five Extension Agents throughout the state. And, while I would still seek grant funding to support and conduct educational outreach and applied research throughout the state, this position would greatly alleviate the headache and heartache of letting farmers down because of the decision of others who do not appear to have Hawaii's agricultural industries in their best interest.

This support position is extremely important and will help to ensure farmers remain in business and Hawaii's communities are fed.

I very humbly ask you to fully support SB865 by funding this educational support associate position. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Andrea Kawabata

Extension Agent for Coffee and Orchard Crops

Kona Research and Extension Center

79-7381 Mamalahoa Highway

Kealakekua, HI 96750

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 11:29:32 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joe Taylor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi my name is Joe Taylor and I live In Holualoa. Please keep this funding for the Agriculture Extension Services, they are a life line of knowledge and practical skills we farmers need in the constantly changing Hawaiian ecology. Matt (cant remember last name) and Andrea Kawabata pour their lifes energy into bringing us the most up to date information about pests and pathogens as well as inviting experts to show us how to graft and manage our fields in a with more success. I take their print outs and share them with my neighbors who cant make it to teh meetings. Please pass SB865 and continue to fund this work. Thank you, Joe Taylor

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 2:27:17 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Kawabata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Ways and Means Committee:

I am writing to you in **strong support of SB865**, which appropriates funding for an educational support associate for the coffee and orchard crops extension program at the Kona Extension Office.

My husband and I are volunteers for this program and have worked with the extension agent and her staff since 2012. We see firsthand how important staff is to this program as they serve two of Hawaii's top agricultural commodities - #3 and #7 by value.

We humbly ask that you support SB865 by funding this bill this legislative session.

Sincerely,

Howard and Ann Kawabata

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 2:37:50 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Juli Satoh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislators, I would like to submit my support of the funding for the educational assistance program. As a new (and female farmer) I have found the seminars, in person visits and the ability to email a knowledgeable source for help and information invaluable. I hope to see the program continue and grow to support myself and other new farmers. Thank you.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 4:58:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William C Wakefield	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony for Bill SB 865

Dear Honorable Senators, February 18, 2025

Our 'ohana has four small successful farms in Kona on the Big Island. We organically farm mango, citrus, and turmeric/olena. We also grow coffee and avocado on our Bishop leasehold farm. *My husband and I have been farming in Kona for about 40 years.* We use the UH College of Tropical Agriculture extensively! They have been an invaluable resource, and we know that we wouldn't be as successful if it weren't for their help and advise, especially helping us battle multiple invasive pests and the nutritional needs of our diverse crops. We derive 100% of our income from farming and now our son and his family are benefitting, also, along with our state's hard working fellow farmers. With our state encouraging food sustainability, and with the growth and potential growth of agriculture in Hawaii right now, we feel that it is imperative to have as much agricultural support as possible and feel that having a permanent educational support associate to support our one extension agent will make a difference.

PLEASE support Bill SB865, appropriating funds to establish a permanent Educational Support Associate position within the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience Kona Cooperative Extension. This will help secure the future of farming here, and will not only impact Hawaii's economy, the next generation of young farmers, but also the livelihood and lifestyle of our island's communities.

Sincerely and with much aloha,

William and Helen "Brooks" Wakefield

Wakefield & Sons, Inc. DBA Wakefield Organics, Ho'omaluhia Farm, Pea Nani Farm

PO Box 1454, Kealakekua, Hawaii 96750

Testimony in Support of SB865 Relating to Agriculture

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is SongYi Paik, and I strongly support SB865, which seeks to establish a permanent educational support associate position within the University of Hawai‘i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources' (CTAHR) Kona Cooperative Extension and Applied Research Program. This position is essential to strengthening research, outreach, and farmer education efforts to address the critical challenges facing Hawaii’s coffee industry.

Hawai‘i’s coffee industry is one of the state’s most valuable agricultural commodity. However, coffee growers continue to face significant threats, particularly from two devastating pests:

1. Coffee Berry Borer (CBB): First detected in Kona in 2010, CBB has since spread to multiple islands, reaching Lāna‘i in 2020. CBB infestations can cause severe yield losses, particularly when harvests are delayed (Barrera, 2008)¹. Effective management requires continuous farmer education, research, and outreach to ensure the adoption of best practices.
2. Coffee Leaf Rust (CLR): First detected in Hawaii in 2020, CLR has now spread to Maui, Hawai‘i Island, O‘ahu, and Lāna‘i. CLR leads to premature leaf drop, weakening plants and significantly reducing coffee cherry production. Further research is urgently needed to identify resistant coffee varieties, assess their viability for Hawaii’s unique growing conditions, and educate farmers on effective management strategies.

Despite the industry’s statewide presence, coffee growers are underserved due to geographic remoteness and the limited capacity of existing CTAHR personnel. Establishing a permanent educational support associate position will provide much-needed assistance to extension faculty, enhance community outreach, and bolster research efforts aimed at mitigating CBB and CLR.

This position is not just an investment in research and education; it is an investment in the sustainability of Hawai‘i’s coffee industry. I respectfully urge the committee to support SB865 and ensure that coffee growers across the state receive the assistance they need to protect their livelihoods and maintain the legacy of Hawai‘i-grown coffee.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important measure.

Sincerely,

SongYi Paik
Assistant Extension Agent
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience
University of Hawaii

¹ Barrera J. F. 2008. Coffee pest and their management. In. Capinera J. L. (Ed). Encyclopedia of Entomology. 2nd edition. Springer. Pp. 961-998.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 6:58:28 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sammi Piasecki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please confirm adding another person to the CTHAR staff. The current staff are amazing but their time is limited. With all the crops they are responsible for supporting, they are spread thin. Please pass this measure and help us farmers grow quality, disease and pest free foods.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 7:04:10 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerry Ross	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

i fully support this bill to provide funds additional personnel for education and outreach at CTAHR Kona. If we are to seriously work on food security as part of the Aloha Plus challenge we need more people on the ground to help improve our knowledge base and expertise as farmers.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 7:36:24 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Matthew Miyahira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB865 to create a permanent support position for the CTAHR Kona Extension Office & its coffee & orchard crops program. This program provides valuable support for coffee growers across the state as pests such as Coffee Berry Borer (CBB), Coffee Root-knot Nematode (CRKN), and Coffee Leaf Rust (CLR) continue to spread. The extension team in Kona provides growers with the knowledge to manage these pests while keeping themselves and their workers safe.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 7:36:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Okamura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kona coffee and other farmers have been facing increasingly frequent challenges in recent years. It has been difficult to maintain our crops without the help of Andrea and her team. They have been crucially important in recommending immediate treatments. AND in translating and implementing ongoing Scientific research which necessarily takes longer time. I have beniffted directly from their research and trial that gave us viable rust resistant coffee varieties eliminating entirely the need for any chemical mitigation. Everyone from farmer to consumer benefits. I would like to emphasize that this was accomplished within a few years after coffee rust devastated our trees. We will need the help of the extension service even more with the increasing frequency of pests and diseases coming into our state. Please support and fund this bill. Thank you very much. Carol Okamura

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 8:42:51 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jon Ching	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

2, 18, 2025

Attention Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Jon Ching, and I have been working in the coffee industry for over 16 years including positions with Kauai Coffee and now with Waialua Estate of Dole Food Company Hawaii.

I write to you as a stakeholder of Hawaii's agriculture. I also write to you in **SUPPORT of Senate Bill 865**.

SB865 (and HB500) appropriates funds to establish a permanent Educational Support Associate position within UH-CTAHR's Kona Cooperative Extension to provide support for the coffee and orchard crop industries. The coffee industry is Hawaii's 3rd largest agricultural commodity encompassing 1,111 farms on 9,422 acres throughout the state and valued at \$49.9 million. The macadamia nut industry is 7th on this list with over 640 farms on 16,800 acres and valued at \$30.9 million. The fruit industry is especially diversified with over 1,700 farms on more than 7,800 acres on the Big Island.

Since 2011, the UH-CTAHR coffee and orchard crops extension program has brought in more than \$4.6 million in grant funding. The agent and her temporary staff have conducted hundreds of workshops, webinars, and field day events statewide to visit farmers and provide education, tools, and resources for the management of coffee berry borer (CBB), coffee leaf rust (CLR), coffee root-knot nematode, and other coffee pests and diseases, fruit tree and macadamia

propagation, irrigation, and research on organic mango fungicides, CBB pesticides, CLR-resistant trees, and improved rootstock with nematode tolerance.

The current coffee and orchard crops Extension program staff is 100% grant funded and in a temporary position. I also understand the funding for this position and coffee leaf rust outreach was diverted from Extension and so the position is in jeopardy of being cut. This position provides a necessary need for the Hawaii coffee industry and has contributed to the success of minimizing the damaging effects of the coffee pests we combat in our farms. If it wasn't for the Cooperative Extension, many coffee farmers would not have been educated and provided the resources to not only control their pests, but also learning techniques to improve tree health and yield.

This educational support position described in SB865 (and HB500) will support Hawaii's top agricultural commodities and help Extension focus on what's important - Hawaii's farming community.

SB865 has my complete support, and I humbly ask that you support it as well.

Sincerely,

Jon Ching

Waialua Estate

Dole Food Company Hawaii

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 8:53:17 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Denis O'Leary	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB865 for the staff funding at the Agriculture Extension Service in West Hawaii. Andrea Kawabata and Matt Miyahira have helped my wife and I as we struggle with an Ambrosia Beetle infestation at our mango farm in the Keahole Ag Park in Kona. Their work is vital to West Hawaii farmers and growers of world renowned Kona coffee.

Their expertise is vital to the support of farming in West Hawaii.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 8:59:32 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nick Yamauchi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kona Coffee is the states most valuable agricultural commodity yet we only have one position to fulfill the needs of an entire industry. With the introduction of CLR farmers are now looking to diversify into other orchard crops too. Funding this position will help with the 'food security' issue and prevent farmers from losing crops.

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 9:08:46 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Robblee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

These folks in the Extension office provide a vital service to our agricultural community. Please do not make their lives, and the lives of our producers more difficult than they need to be.

thank you.

Mary Robblee

LATE

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 11:19:25 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolyn Witcover	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this Bill for much needed funding for an additional position at the Kona Extension Office. More positions are needed in fact and not fewer. The office supports hundreds of farmers and it is not feasible for one person to do that. Please support those who support Hawaiian agriculture.

LATE

SB-865-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 11:20:21 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alla Kostenko	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill.