



HAWAII FOOD POLICY

Growing Hawai'i's
Next Generation
of Civic Leaders

SPRING 2026

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MESSAGES FROM THE TEAM

JANINE



This session was a season of experimentation. We tried a lot of things for the first time, in an effort to make the most of our short time together. Not everything landed the way we expected, and there were growing pains along the way. But I'm proud of how you all leaned into it anyway.

"It's good to try anyway" became something of a mantra for me these past few months, and it's partly inspired by all of you. Some of you tried policy and found something you want to keep doing. Others found that this might not be your path, but you walked away with tools that you can use anywhere to advocate for what you care about.

I hope I made it clear at your hō'ike, but the testimony you wrote, the community members you reached out to, the op-eds you crafted all show the care you put into our food system.

And this report is evidence of that care. I'm proud of how far you've all come. Keep trying anyway, wherever you go next.

Mahalo nui for showing up and growing with us this session

CLYDS



Mahalo for the time, energy, and heart you've brought to your work. Your presence and the energy you've invested in Hawai'i's food systems give me hope for what's ahead. The challenges are real, but so is our power to shift systems through advocacy. I look forward to seeing what you do next and I hope to see you continue supporting food system transformation in Hawai'i!



SYDNEY

I truly appreciate everyone's diligent effort in being dedicated food systems advocates this session. It is heartwarming to see the enthusiastic commitment you all have to creating positive change for your communities, 'āina, and local food producers. My final request to you is to pass along everything you've learned during your experience, keep having thoughtful conversations, and remain intentional in all that you do. I hope you all feel empowered to continue sharing your voice in public policy and stepping up for Hawai'i's food system.



CARLIN



To my interns, thank you for bringing your energy, ideas, and heart into this work. Watching each of you find your voice, ask hard questions, and step into spaces that can feel intimidating has been one of the most rewarding parts of this journey. I hope you leave this experience knowing that change happens because people choose to show up, stay curious, and care deeply about their communities. Keep speaking up, keep getting involved, and never underestimate the impact your voice can have.

BRANDON

Aloha nō kākou and mahalo nui for the opportunity to develop alongside each of you as we navigated engaging with the 2026 legislative session. It was a privilege to lead you gals, the Mana Wāhine, through the session. We were able to adhere to a high-demand and quick-pace working environment while still delivering a quality of work and keeping it light, humorous, and fun.



Mahalo Nui Loa!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hawai'i's food system sits at the intersection of some of the state's most pressing challenges. Food insecurity, climate change, an aging agricultural workforce, barriers to land access, and increasing dependence on imported food all impact the health, resilience, and wellbeing of communities across the pae 'āina. Addressing these challenges requires more than individual programs or isolated solutions. It requires informed communities, engaged leaders, and meaningful participation in the policymaking process.

Established in December 2020, Hawai'i Food+ Policy was created to help bridge the gap between community members and the policies that shape Hawai'i's food system. What began as a community-rooted effort to track food and agriculture legislation has grown into a statewide initiative focused on civic engagement, governance literacy, youth leadership development, and food systems transformation. Through policy education, advocacy, community outreach, and coalition building, Hawai'i Food+ Policy works to ensure that more people understand how public policy influences food access, agriculture, environmental stewardship, and community wellbeing.

At the heart of this work is the Hawai'i Food+ Policy Internship, a flagship leadership development program that places emerging leaders at the center of policy work. Through hands-on legislative advocacy, systems thinking, public narrative, research, and community engagement, participants gain practical experience while contributing directly to efforts that strengthen Hawai'i's food system. The internship creates pathways for emerging leaders to understand government, engage with decision-makers, and develop the skills necessary to participate in shaping the future of Hawai'i.





The 2026 legislative session marked an important year of growth and innovation for Hawai'i Food+ Policy. Alongside the continued success of the internship program, new initiatives emerged to expand opportunities for civic participation and food systems innovation. These included the development of an automated legislative bill-tracking platform, the launch of the Food+Policy Incubator and Hackathon, and the advancement of community-rooted policy proposals designed to strengthen workforce development, food system resilience, and local agriculture.

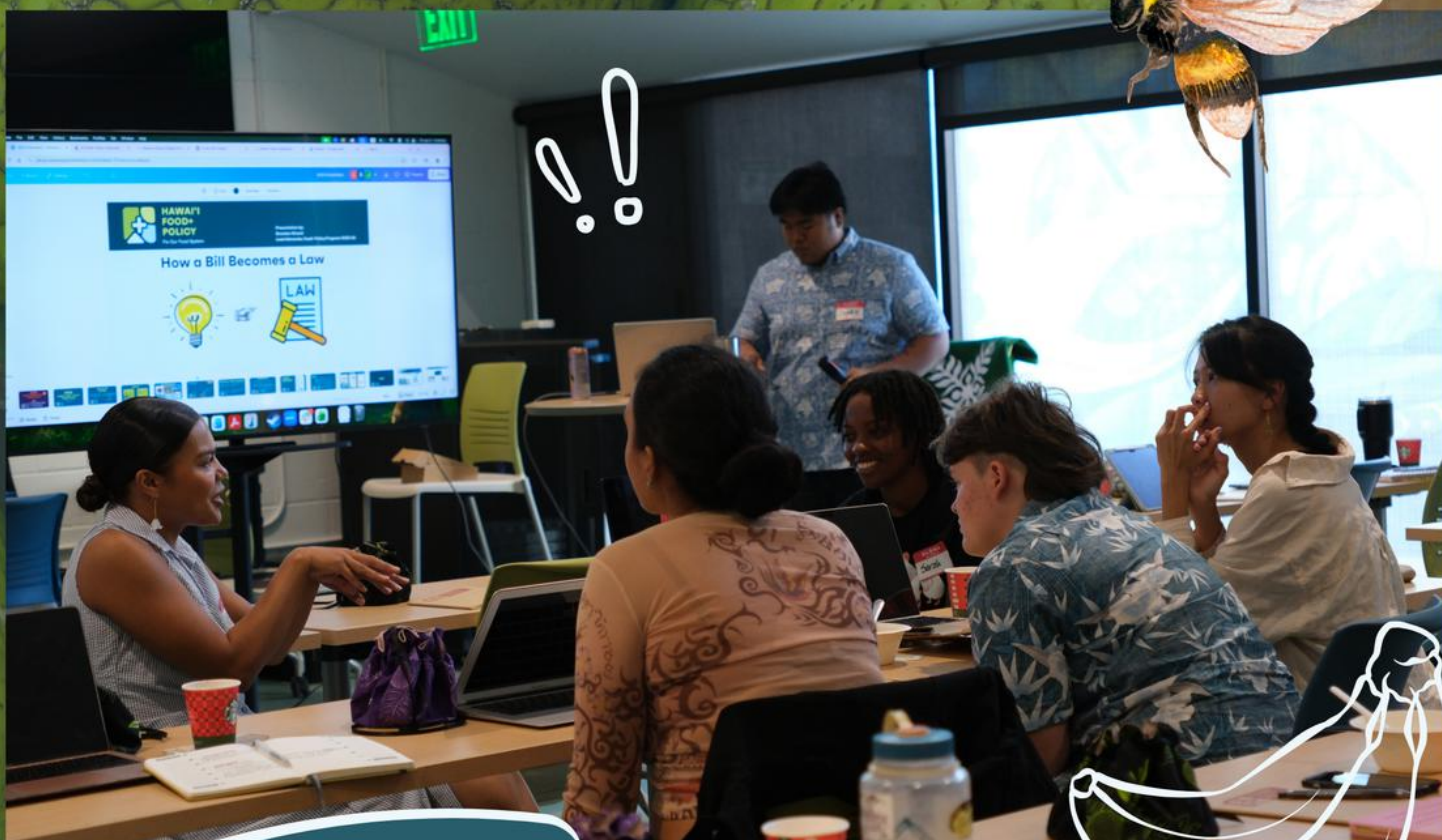
Grounded in a vision of a Hawai'i nourished by resilient, equitable, and 'āina-centered food systems, Hawai'i Food+ Policy remains committed to developing the next generation of food system leaders while helping communities better understand, engage with, and influence the policies that shape their future. This report highlights the accomplishments, partnerships, innovations, and collective efforts that defined the 2026 year and reflects the growing movement of people working together to build a stronger food system for Hawai'i.

Our Vision



A Hawai'i where communities are nourished by resilient, equitable, and 'āina-centered food systems led by informed and empowered people of those places.





Our Mission

To develop the next generation of food system leaders by providing hands-on policy education, mentorship, and opportunities to engage in community-centered, 'āina-rooted food system work.



A close-up photograph of a banana plant, showing large green leaves and a bunch of green bananas on the right side. The background is slightly blurred, focusing on the plant's details.

Pillar 1:

Local Agriculture, Farmers, & Food Production

Strengthen Hawai'i's capacity to feed itself by supporting local farmers, expanding opportunities for young and emerging farmers, and reducing reliance on imported foods.

2026 Policy Intentions

Our advocacy efforts are deeply guided by the policy intentions we thoughtfully set at the beginning of the legislative session. We organized our intentions into 4 pillars that reflect our commitment to supporting a sustainable, resilient, and equitable food system in Hawai'i that centers community, nourishment, and 'āina.

Pillar 2:

**Regenerative,
Indigenous, & Climate-
Resilient Food Systems**

Restore ecosystems, uplift indigenous knowledge, and build long-term resilience in the face of climate change.

Pillar 3:

**Food Access, Health,
& Cultural Nourishment**

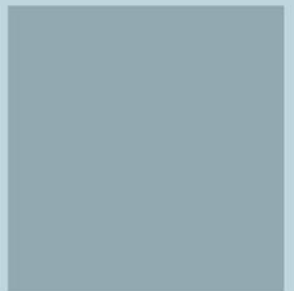
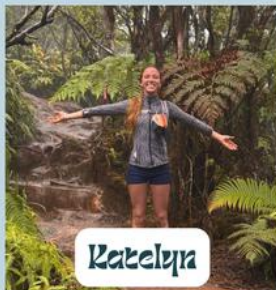
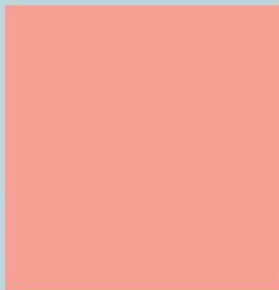
Support community access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally meaningful food.

Pillar 4:

**Farm to School,
Education, and Youth
Food Pathways**

Increase food literacy and strengthen the connection between learners and Hawai'i-grown foods.

2026



Cohort



Bianca



Griffin



Isa



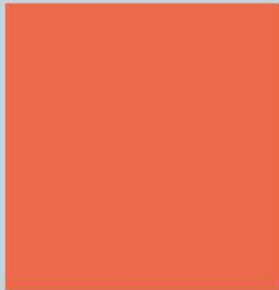
Jon



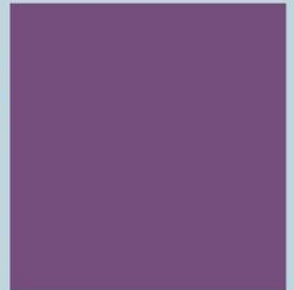
Kaina



Logan



MD



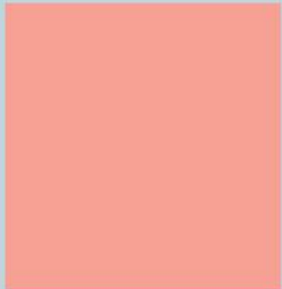
Mo



Porska



RJ



Sineca



Xiaoyun



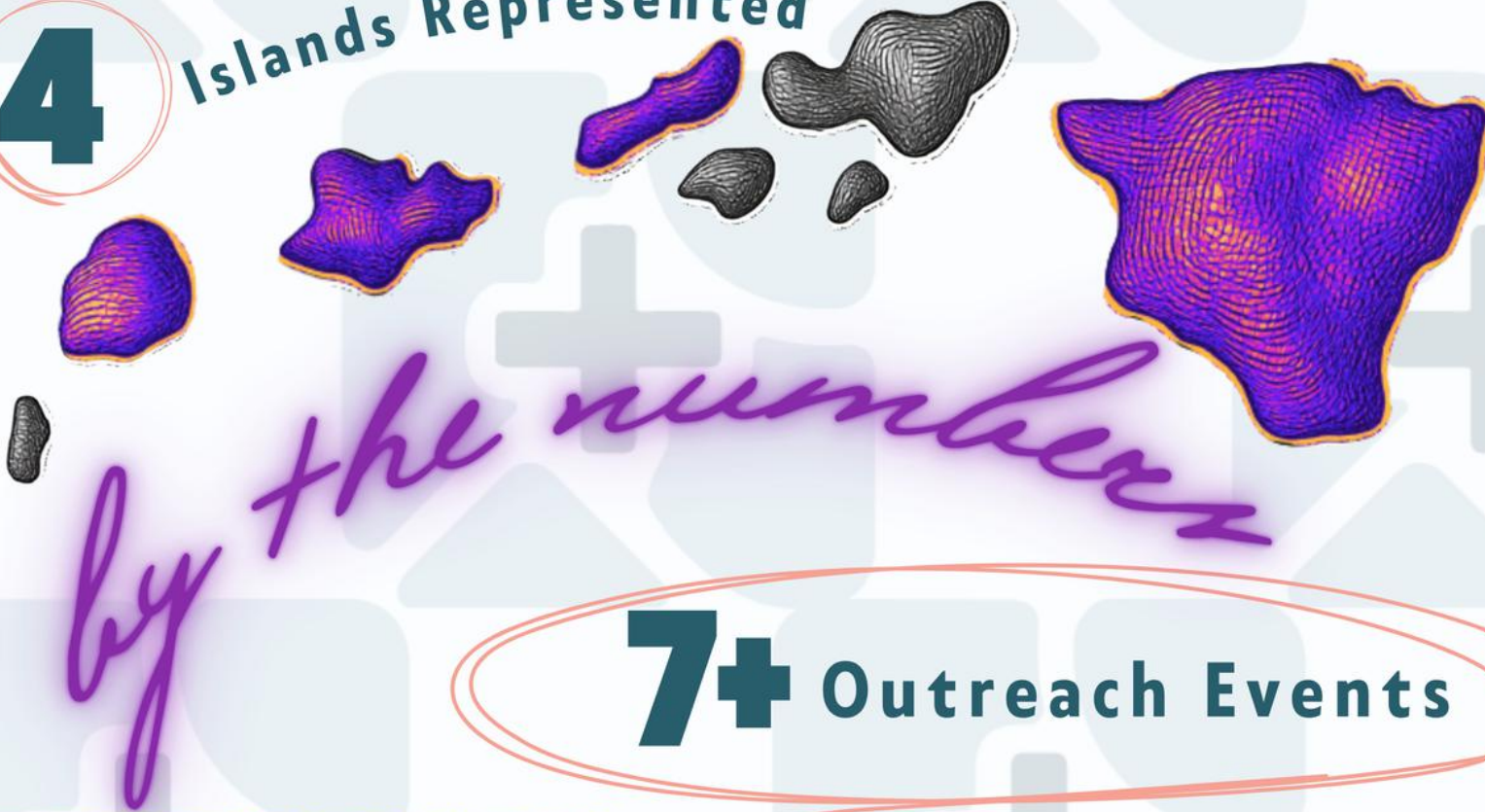
25 Interns Total

- Trained 25 emerging leaders in civic engagement, food systems, policy, and systems thinking.
- Developed workforce-ready skills in research, public speaking, leadership, professional communication, and policy analysis.



4

Islands Represented



7+ Outreach Events



- Hosted workshops, networking events, and community discussions while partnering with nonprofits, coalitions, and community organizations across Hawai'i.
- Strengthened cross-sector relationships and gave back through service and engagement with the communities and food systems we advocate for.



190 Testimonies Submitted

- Provided hands-on experience in democratic participation and advocacy.
- Equipped interns with practical skills in policy research, persuasive writing, and public communication.

21 Food Systems Bills Transmitted to the Governor



15 Signed Into Law (so far)

- Advanced policies addressing food security, agriculture, and climate resilience, with one bill already enacted into law.
- Showcased how youth civic engagement can translate into measurable policy impact.

2 HF+P Initiated Bills Introduced

- Introduced SB2320 (KAPP) and SB2718 to advance AgTech workforce pathways and agroforestry food hubs.
- Promoted youth-driven solutions for climate resilience and local food systems.

LEARNING

"Policy can either reinforce inequities or help address them"



100%
reported meaningful growth in their understanding of Hawai'i's food system.

"I can really engage with the civic process in a way that I wasn't necessarily able to before because I now have the tools to do so"

87%
would consider pursuing future opportunities in advocacy.



OUTCOMES

93%

**felt more confident
engaging in food
system advocacy.**

*"Knowledge is power,
and learning how to
make the change I
want to see is very
empowering"*



*"Being part of this hui keeps me
motivated and inspired! I feel so
passionately about our food
systems and being around other
folks who are just as passionate
makes me want to become as
much activated as I can"*



Legislation We

POLICY ISSUE AREAS



Agricultural Land

Bills that support mechanisms that aid beginning farmers in navigating access to land that meets their affordability constraints, production goals, and housing needs. Additionally, we advocate for policies that help ensure agricultural land is designated for farming purposes and not being misused for non-agricultural development or other land-use conflicts. Such policies include agricultural zoning, land leases, tax incentives.

Agricultural Workforce & Education

Bills that help expand opportunities for beginning farmers and entryways into the agricultural sector through workforce development, training, and mentorship. Some legislation involves developing programs that provide skill-building experience, education, and create career pipelines. Other bills address agricultural workforce-related barriers like housing needs.



Aquaculture & Fishponds

Bills that promote sustainable aquaculture practices and revitalizing traditional Hawaiian fishponds, or loko i'a. Such policies include permitting, funding for restoration, workforce development, and supporting Indigenous-led stewardship of coastal resources.

Advocated For

POLICY ISSUE AREAS

Biosecurity & Invasive Species

Bills that support the management of invasive species and mitigation of biosecurity threats to protect 'āina and preserve our communities' food sovereignty. Such policies focus on strengthening enforcement, tax incentives, funding research, and combatting pest infestations.



Emergency Preparedness & Community Resilience

Bills that help address food and supply chain resilience during natural disasters and emergencies. Such policies include: installing disaster-relief food storage hubs or pods; providing emergency preparedness education for our communities; supporting our food producers through local procurement and aid during disasters; developing the network of Hawai'i's food hubs; and updating strategies to improve statewide response to disruptions.



Farm to School

Bills that strengthen local procurement by school institutions and help our farmers hui up with school meal programs to improve keiki health, food security, and culturally-centered menus. This focus area also prioritizes legislation that integrates agriculture and 'āina-based education into school curriculum.

Legislation We

POLICY ISSUE AREAS



Farmer Support

Bills that support resources and career viability for local farmers while also strengthening local food economies. Such policies include: grant opportunities and grant writing assistance; training programs; market access and data; technical assistance; investments in infrastructure like value-added processing and food hubs; and reducing financial barriers. Specifically, we prioritize policies that address barriers faced by small-scale producers and farmers wanting to practice traditional Native Hawaiian agriculture.

Food Access

Bills that support food and nutrition security by improving access to nutrient-dense, culturally-appropriate, and locally grown food. Such policies address physical access to food especially in rural communities or urban areas where transportation is a challenge. Policies also account for affordability of food by expanding SNAP access, eliminating GET taxes on food, incentive programs like DA BUX that help families stretch their food budgets, and kūpuna-focused models.



Food Safety

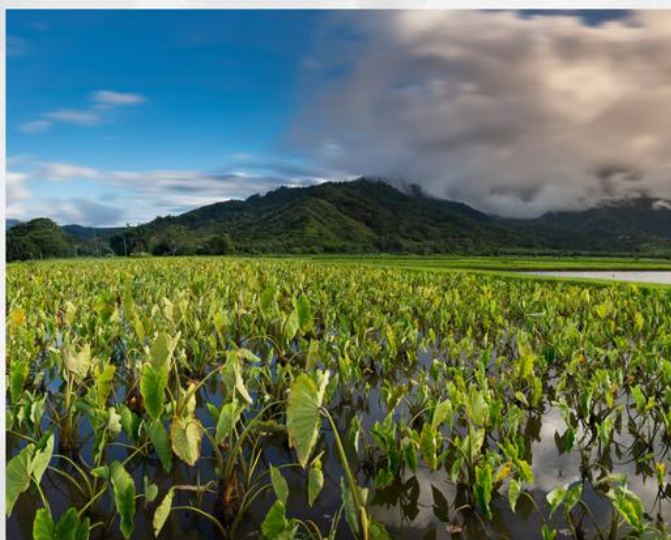
Bills that help ensure safe manufacturing, handling, sale, and distribution of food with regard to public and environmental health. Such bills include regulation, inspections, investigation of outbreaks, enforcement, education, and training opportunities.

Advocated For

POLICY ISSUE AREAS

Local Food System Development

Bills related to one or more elements of the local food system including production, infrastructure, processing, storage, and distribution. Policies often highlight intentions like developing an integrated food system network, community-based planning, data collection and research, increasing food systems jobs, and building the local agricultural economy.



Soil, Health, & Ecosystem Health

Bills in support of regenerative agriculture, improving soil health, invasive species control, climate-smart initiatives, sustainable waste management, and stewardship of land and natural resources. Such policies encourage ecosystem preservation, conservation, biodiversity protection, and reducing chemical inputs.

Water

Bills that support efforts related to sustainable agricultural water use, stream restoration, irrigation system upgrades, and the management of watersheds and waterways especially for downstream farmers. We also focus on bills that support equitable water rights, particularly with respect for traditional Native Hawaiian cultural uses.



!!

"I visualize policy as one of the many gears in a machine that is the food system, and that without it, it won't be able to push change forward."





“Even though I am just one person on my own, maybe I can’t make that much noise, but all together we can fix the food system. This has been a reminder how valuable local participation is to actually make change.”



21 FOOD SYSTEMS BILLS REACHED THE GOVERNOR!

SB3137

Removes duplicative food-related statutory material and aligns all food-related provisions under chapter 328, HRS to improve the safety of food, drugs, and cosmetics.

Local Food System Development & Food Safety

SB2360

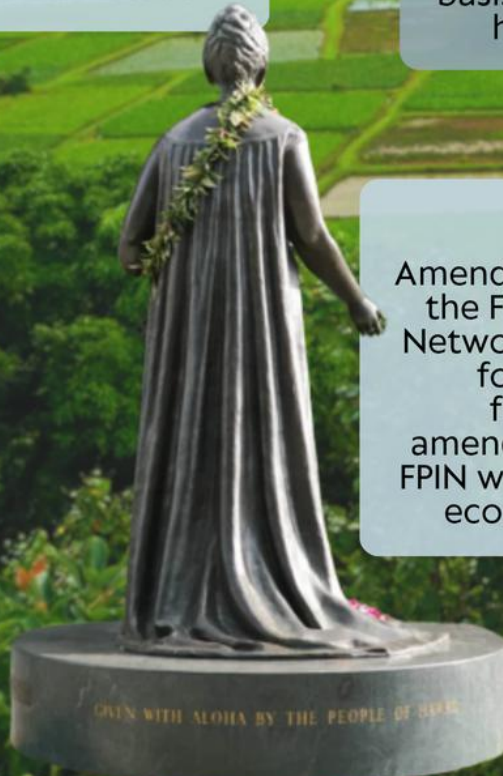
Amends the definition of "eligible business activity" for the purposes of the Enterprise Zone Program to include processing of certain value-added agricultural products and activities of the Hawai'i FPIN.

SB3302

Requires the Department of Health to adopt rules to authorize and regulate farm kitchens on the same basis as home kitchens producing homemade food products.

SB3320

Amends chapter 163D, HRS to require the Food and Product Innovation Network to integrate a coordinated food safety and regulatory framework, among other amendments that help better align FPIN with Hawai'i's food security and economic diversification goals.



SB3245

Requires the Department of Human Services to adjust minimum certification periods of SNAP and participate in the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP).

Food Access, Nutrition, & Farm to School

HB2310

Provides a \$14.2 million appropriation to the Department of Human Services to replenish funds redirected to emergency food assistance during the 2025 federal government shutdown.

HB1518

Requires the Department of Human Services to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release.

HB2300

Removes administrative barriers and clarifies a \$200,000 threshold for Department of Education procurement of local edible produce and packaged food products.

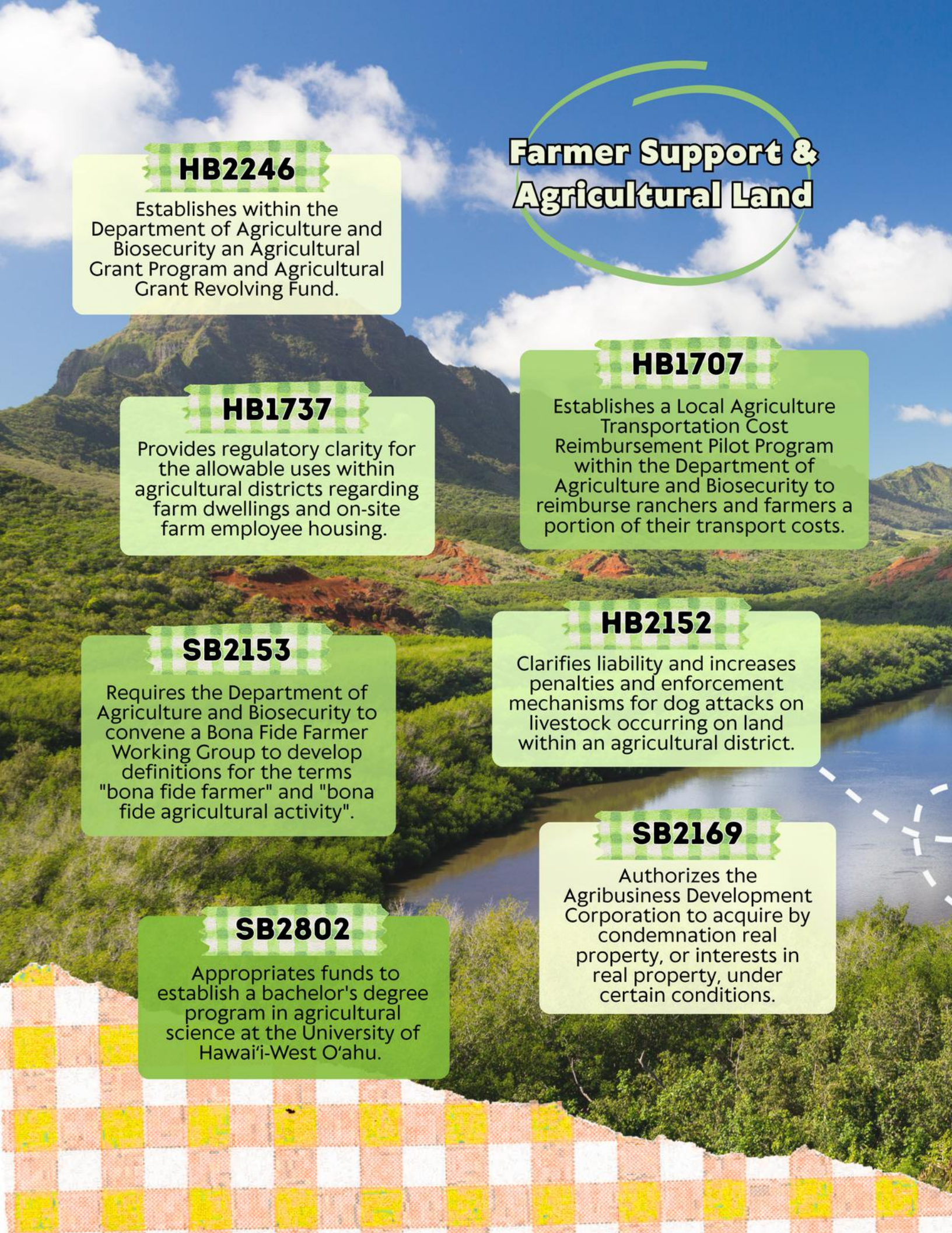
HB2296

Reduces the minimum amount the Department of Education can charge from a school meal from one-half to one-quarter the cost of preparing the meal.

HB2338

Amends the Hawai'i Community College Promise Program to award scholarships for 95% of a student's unmet direct cost needs so they can instead apply funds toward indirect costs like food.





Farmer Support & Agricultural Land

HB2246

Establishes within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity an Agricultural Grant Program and Agricultural Grant Revolving Fund.

HB1737

Provides regulatory clarity for the allowable uses within agricultural districts regarding farm dwellings and on-site farm employee housing.

HB1707

Establishes a Local Agriculture Transportation Cost Reimbursement Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to reimburse ranchers and farmers a portion of their transport costs.

SB2153

Requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to convene a Bona Fide Farmer Working Group to develop definitions for the terms "bona fide farmer" and "bona fide agricultural activity".

HB2152

Clarifies liability and increases penalties and enforcement mechanisms for dog attacks on livestock occurring on land within an agricultural district.

SB2802

Appropriates funds to establish a bachelor's degree program in agricultural science at the University of Hawai'i-West O'ahu.

SB2169

Authorizes the Agribusiness Development Corporation to acquire by condemnation real property, or interests in real property, under certain conditions.



Conservation, Biosecurity, & Ecosystem Health

HB2218

Authorizes the Board of Land and Natural Resources to enter into community co-management agreements and establishes qualifications for community co-managers.

SB2101

Updates and establishes statewide goals for integrated solid waste management including reducing the solid waste stream and increasing organic waste stream diversion.

HB1823

Amends the definition of "development" under Hawai'i's Coastal Zone Management Act to exempt certain state or county funded infrastructure improvement projects from special management area use permit requirements.

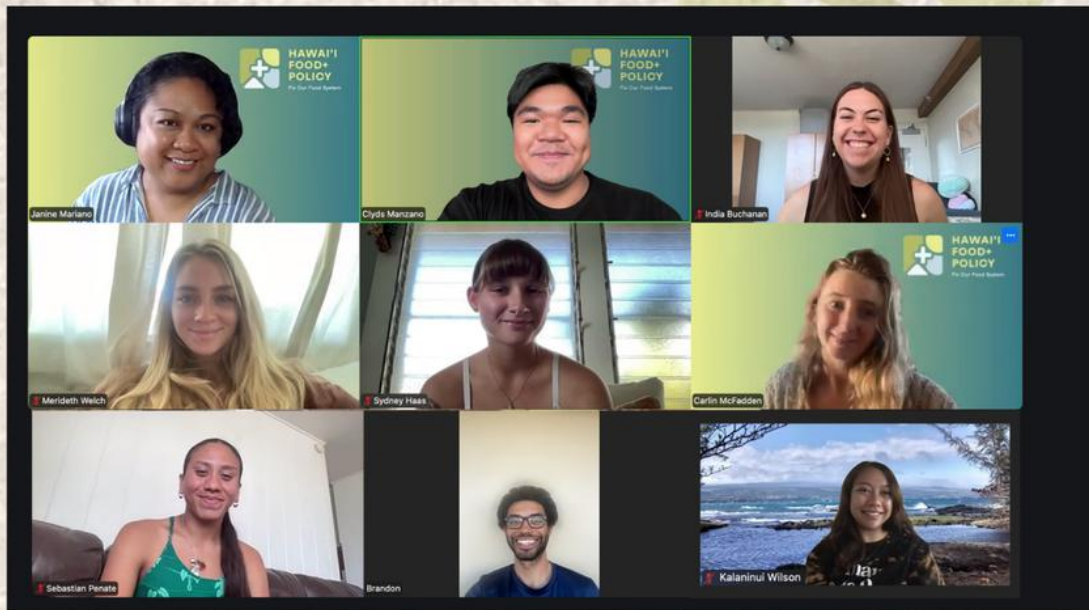
HB2207

Allows the use of certain monofilament netting for the protection of plants against invasive species. Requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to establish rules for the sale and distribution of fine mesh nets.

A large digital display on a wall showing a 'FOOD POLICY HACKATHON' event. The display is divided into sections with various graphics and text. The main text reads 'FOOD POLICY HACKATHON' in large, bold, black letters. Below it, 'HAWAII FOOD+ POLICY' is written in blue, followed by 'Fix Our Food System' in smaller black text. To the right, 'STUPSKI FOUNDATION' is displayed in white. The background features colorful illustrations of food items like watermelon, kiwi, and a kiwi fruit, along with a stylized blue and white logo.

A large digital display on a wall, divided into several panels. The central panel features the text "FOOD POLICY HACKATHON" in large, bold, black letters. Below it, in blue letters, is "HAWAII FOOD+ POLICY", and further down in smaller black text is "Fix Our Food System". To the right of this, another panel displays the "STUPSKI FOUNDATION" logo in white letters on a purple background. The entire graphic is decorated with various food-related illustrations: a watermelon slice at the bottom left, an orange slice at the top left, a pink bell pepper on the right, and several smaller fruit and vegetable icons. The display is mounted on a light-colored brick wall.





The incubator grew out of Hawai'i's first Food Policy Hackathon, hosted in collaboration with the Stupski Foundation in April 2025 — an event that brought together students, advocates, and community members to spark bold ideas for food systems change. The incubator became the structured next step: more time, more mentorship, more room for those ideas to grow into something real.

Nine participants, including students from UH Mānoa and Hawai'i Pacific University, joined that first cohort in August 2025. Over the next 14 weeks, they moved through four modules — Rooting In, Research & Rework, Engage & Iterate, and Prepare & Pitch — building from a rough idea to a full advocacy brief, presented at a final showcase in October.

In its very first year, the incubator produced two bills introduced to the 2026 Hawai'i Legislature. Their full stories are on the pages ahead.

Behind Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program SB2320

Developed by: Carlin McFadden, HF+P Lead Advocate

The Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program (KAPP) began during the 2025 Food+ Policy Hackathon, where interns were challenged to develop community-rooted solutions to some of Hawai'i's most pressing food system challenges. One team was tasked with addressing Hawai'i's aging agricultural workforce and the declining number of young people entering the sector. The challenge prompted a new question: What if agriculture was reimagined as a high-skill, technology-driven, and place-based career pathway for Hawai'i's next generation?

The idea drew inspiration from an intern's experience with teaching place-based GIS and environmental justice education in high schools across Hawai'i. Students used mapping technologies to investigate climate resilience and community issues. These experiences demonstrated that agriculture, conservation, and emerging technologies such as GIS, drones, and data science need not exist in separate silos. When integrated with Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), they can become powerful tools for stewardship, resilience, and workforce development.

Through the 14-week Food+ Policy Incubator, KAPP evolved from a moonshot idea into a research-backed policy proposal through systems analysis, white paper development, community surveying, stakeholder engagement, and legislative outreach. The proposal ultimately became Senate Bill 2320 (SB2320), introduced by Senators Gabbard, Chang, Hashimoto, Kanuha, McKelvey, Richards, and San Buenaventura.

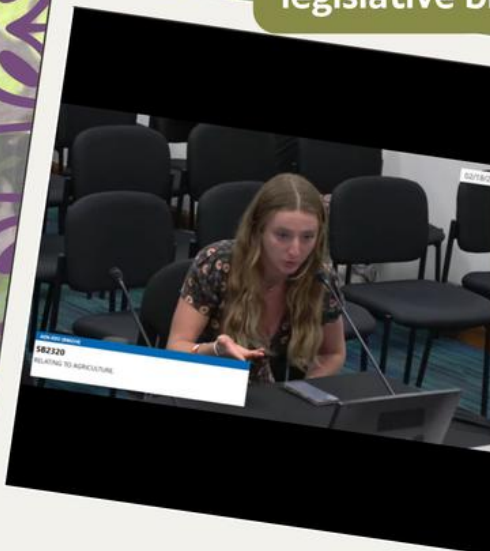
Legislation Spotlight

What began as a Hackathon challenge became a statewide vision for cultivating Hawai'i's next generation of land stewards, technologists, and food system leaders.

SB2320 proposed a statewide education-to-workforce pipeline in agricultural technology, establishing regional AgTech hubs and creating pathways for students to gain experience in GIS, drones, climate-smart agriculture, precision agriculture, internships, apprenticeships, and dual-credit opportunities rooted in place-based learning and TEK.

The measure advanced through the regular legislative session and reached Conference Committee, one of the final stages of Hawai'i's legislative process. While the bill did not become law during the 2026 session, KAPP demonstrated the power of youth-led policy innovation and the ability of Food+ Policy participants to transform ideas into serious legislative proposals.

Looking ahead, the next phase of KAPP will focus on strengthening implementation feasibility, deepening interagency and community partnerships, and preparing the proposal for reintroduction during Hawai'i's next legislative biennium in 2027.



The Ho'okupu 'Ai Act The Story of SB2718

Developed by Kalaninui Wilson, Intern

Emerging from the Food+ Policy Incubator, SB2718 recognized that growing more local food is only part of the solution. Hawai'i also needs the infrastructure to move, process, and connect that food to the communities it serves.



The bill proposed expanding Hawai'i's Food Hub Pilot Program through a \$5 million investment in food hub infrastructure, native crop processing, and farm-to-institution pathways, while requiring major state agencies to work toward sourcing at least 30 percent of their produce locally by 2028.

SB2718 envisioned food hubs as community infrastructure that supports local farmers, strengthens food sovereignty, and increases resilience to future disruptions.



The measure received unanimous support in Senate policy committees and advanced to Senate Ways and Means (WAM), where it ultimately stalled due to fiscal considerations.



Although it did not become law in 2026, SB2718 elevated an important conversation: a resilient food system requires not only local production, but also the systems that connect farms to schools, hospitals, and communities across Hawai'i.

TIMELINE OF KEY MOMENTS



Food+ Expands Beyond the Internship

Building on ideas generated through the Food+ Policy Hackathon, the Food+ Policy Incubator was created to help participants develop place-based policy solutions to Hawai'i's food system challenges. Two proposals that emerged from this process—SB2320 (Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program) and SB2718 (Ho'okupu 'Ai Food Hub Pilot)—advanced through the 2026 legislative session.



Internship Orientation

The 2026 cohort kicked off the legislative session with a policy bootcamp, systems thinking activities, and an introduction to Hawai'i's legislative process.

Fall 2025

Jan

Automated Bill tracker Developed

In partnership with Purple Mai'a's technology team, Food+ launched an automated legislative bill tracker using web scraping and large language model (LLM) technology. The platform expanded Food+'s ability to monitor legislation, organize policy information, and support civic engagement..



SUBMIT



First Testimony Submitted

After weeks of legislative training and bill analysis, interns submitted their first testimonies of the session, transforming research and community values into direct policy advocacy.

Feb

AgDay At the Capitol

Interns traveled to the State Capitol to meet legislators, connect with stakeholders, learn more about the measures they were tracking, and gain firsthand experience navigating the legislative process and building coalitions.

Kalili Farms Workday

Interns visited Kalili Farms in Waialua, where Uncle John shared the realities of small-scale farming in Hawai'i. The visit provided a hands-on introduction to local food systems, agricultural challenges, and the opportunities facing the next generation of farmers.



Uncle John's Farm



Met stakeholders of our bills

TIMELINE OF KEY MOMENTS



Hanakēhau

Hosted by intern Jayde Addison at her longtime workplace, Hanakēhau gave the cohort an opportunity to learn about beekeeping, pollinator health, and the important role bees play in Hawai'i's food system while connecting agricultural practices to broader food system resilience.



Hanakēhau

WeGrow Summit

Interns joined students, educators, and community leaders from across Hawai'i to explore sustainable agriculture, school gardens, indigenous food systems, and youth advocacy. The summit highlighted the power of young people to influence food policy and shape the future of Hawai'i's food system.



March

April

Kalo Fest

Food+ participated in Kalo Fest, celebrating kalo as a cornerstone of Hawaiian culture and food systems. Following the Kona Low storms of 2026, interns also helped share emergency preparedness resources and support community donation efforts for impacted families.



Kalo Fest '26



KAPP Advances to Conference Committee

The Kuleana AgTech Pathways Program (SB2320), developed through the Food+ Policy Incubator, advanced to Conference Committee during the 2026 legislative session. The measure proposed new pathways connecting youth to careers in agriculture, aquaculture, hydroponics, and emerging agricultural technologies.



End of Internship Ho'ike

The cohort gathered to celebrate the conclusion of the internship, sharing accomplishments, lessons learned, and reflections on a legislative session dedicated to strengthening Hawai'i's food system.

21 Bills Transmitted to the Governor

Legislation spanning all four Food+ policy pillars advanced to the Governor's desk, reflecting months of testimony, relationship-building, coalition work, and community advocacy.



Ha'ike <3

Eahou Fest

Food+ facilitated a workshop titled "Does the Kanawai Align with the Kānāwai?" exploring the relationship between contemporary policy and ancestral ecological law. The festival brought together community members, artists, technologists, and organizers working toward a more self-determined Hawai'i.



Food system Lab



"I really enjoyed our learning sessions and community outreach because it was so nice to be able to learn from the people who are putting the work into the food system right now. I'm excited to take that knowledge into the future and into whatever I do."





Learning Sessions

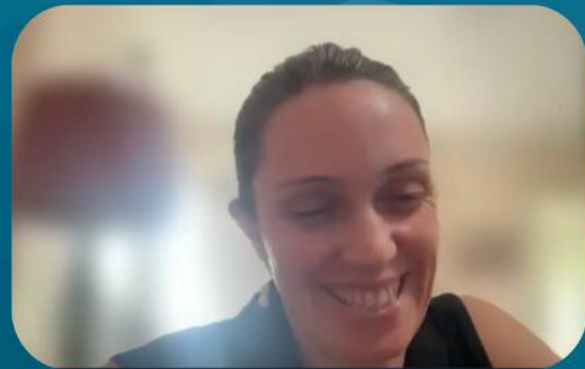


ALBIE MILES

Our learning sessions kicked off with Albie Miles who discussed the hidden cost of food, impacts and consequences to human and environmental health from our current food system, and the factors that contribute to these increasing costs incurred by our food systems.

AMANDA SHAW

Amanda Shaw, Hawai'i's Statewide Food Systems Coordinator with Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i, discussed statewide efforts to strengthen local food systems through increased federal funding, institutional purchasing, and cross-sector collaboration. She highlighted the importance of partnerships and systems thinking in building a more resilient and equitable food system.



ZACK PILIEN

The third learning session was led by Zack Pilen with Makali'i Metrics. He discussed his role performing soil fertility and soil nutrient analysis for farms across the pae'āina.

KELLY TEAMEY AND KEONI DEFRANCO

Keoni and Kelly joined the learning sessions to explain what cooperatives are and share their efforts building a foundation for cooperative growth. Keoni is a managing director of 'āina foundry with Purple Mai'a, Kelly is a co-founder of Enliven Cooperative, and both working with coops in agriculture and other worker based enterprises..



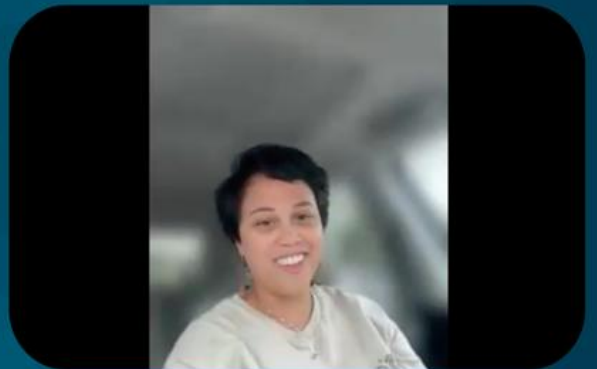


MACKENZIE FELDMAN

Mackenzie Feldman shared how grassroots organizing and student advocacy can create meaningful institutional change. Her presentation highlighted the connections between environmental justice, sustainable food systems, and community-led action, inspiring interns to think about how local advocacy can drive broader systems change.

ALEX NARRAJOS

Alex currently serves as a Sustainable Agriculture and Food System Program Manager for the City and County of Honolulu, Office of Economic Revitalization. She discussed the city role in creating a sustainable and resilient food system.



LAUREN NELSON

Lauren Nelson from the Maui County Dept. of Ag. talked about the first county-based department of agriculture and the nuances of not overstepping state department efforts with the county. She discussed the food system plan and offered new perspectives and job opportunities to the cohort.

ANNE FREDERICK

Anne Frederick is the executive director at Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) and assisted in starting the program. She discussed the work HAPA covers over several different focus areas with primarily food system legislation against Restricted Use Pesticides.



Social Impact

This internship is about more than policy, it's about people. Through outreach events, op-eds, social media, and public storytelling, interns connected with their communities and helped start conversations around food system change.

10+ Outreach materials created

7 Outreach events attended





Throughout the session, interns attended tabling events where they could network with food systems stakeholders, educate the public about civic engagement, and communicate about various food policy issues.

Interns were proactive advocates by designing outreach materials to help gain support for meaningful food and agriculture bills.





Community



Interns participated in work days to connect with 'āina and Hawai'i's agricultural communities. Interns had the opportunity to unplug and take a break from diligently tracking bills and writing testimony.

At these events, interns learned about Hawai'i's food system and heard directly from the community voices that helped guide their advocacy efforts.



Work Days

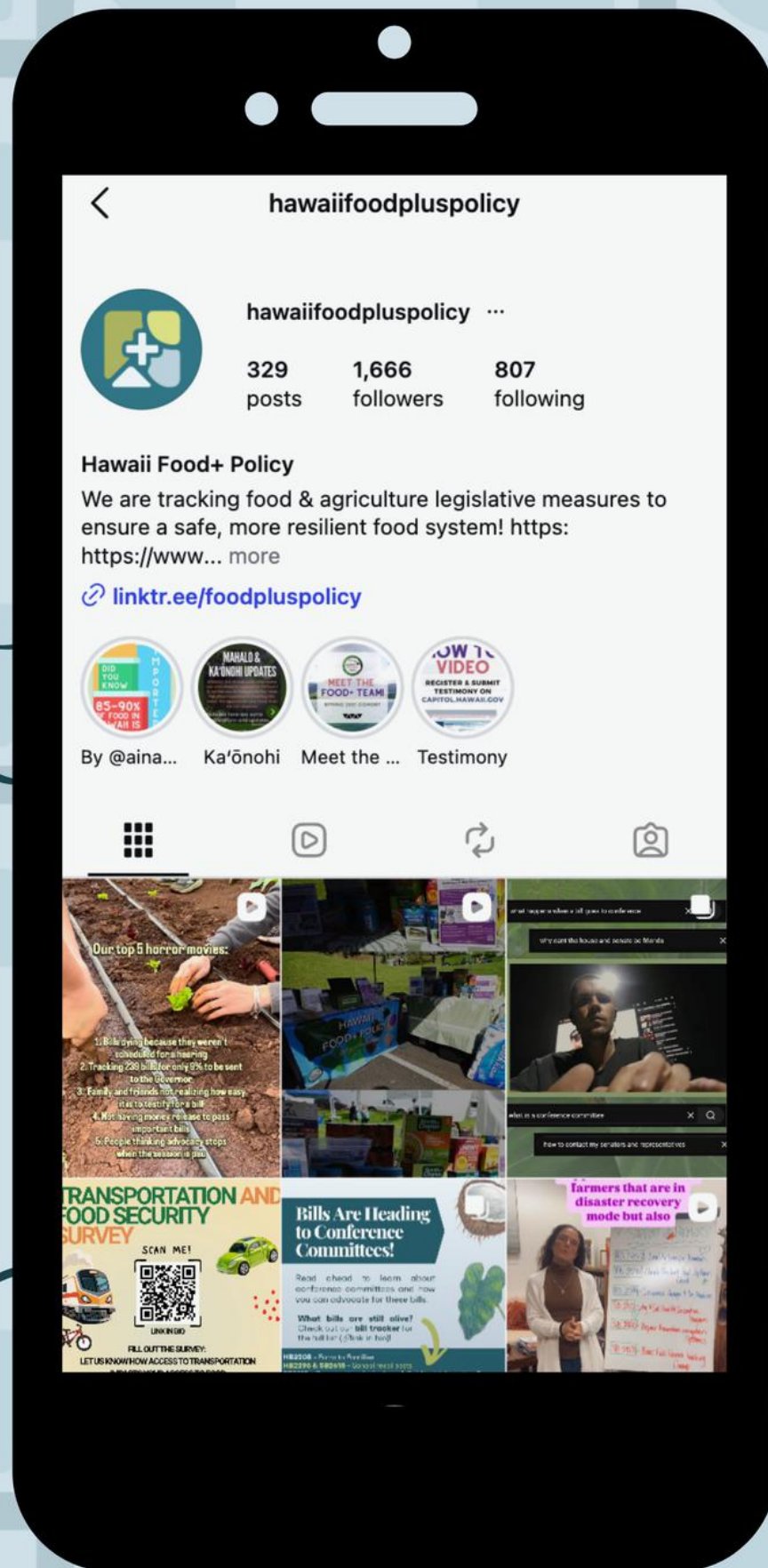


523
total
likes

14 IG
posts

52 total
reposts

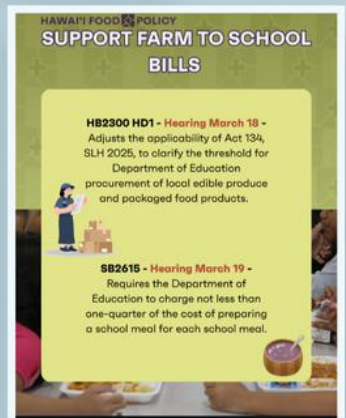
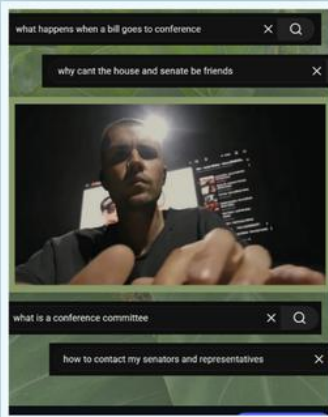
15,139
total
views



80
Shares

40
Comments

Social Media



Op Ed Summaries: The Voice Of Advocates

During our internship, we wanted to provide our interns with an opportunity to share their opinions on pressing issues affecting our food system. In the combined 8 weeks, our interns wrote op-eds as a way to express their concerns and advocate for change. Op-eds are an important tool for informing the public about key issues and encouraging discussions about potential solutions.

With a cohort of diverse leaders many touched on different topics that brought new perspective on existing issues and future ones. Their diverse opinions shares the evolving thoughts and opinions of the new generation of food system leaders.

This experience deepened our interns understanding of policy, sharpened our research and writing skills, and expanded our understanding of the food system. Many pieces were positioned for publication and will be used in public advocacy, testimony, and outreach materials

49

total Op-eds
produced

"Op-eds were very helpful in exploring more about issues within the food system and presenting them in an easily digestible format for the public."



Op-eds are being posted on our Medium! Click the logo to check out our profile.

Food Justice



Obesity is a System, Not a Choice.

By: Ava Thomas

Addressing obesity in Hawai'i requires improving food security and supporting culturally grounded, community-based solutions that make healthy food accessible to everyone.



Rescuing Food: From Waste to Wellness

By: Jonathan DiVietro

Reducing food waste and expanding food rescue efforts can help create a more equitable Hawai'i by connecting surplus food with communities experiencing hunger and food insecurity.



The Roots of the Banyan Tree: An Advocacy for Immigrant Farm Workers in Hawaii

By: Logan Naranjo

Supporting and protecting immigrant farm workers is essential to building a fair, resilient, and sustainable agricultural future for Hawai'i

Quick Note!

If you would like to read the OpEd, click the orange circle with the link symbol



Economic Development



Local food is a public good — But we Treat it like a Luxury Product

By: Xiaoyun Neo

Farmers market can play a role in building Hawai'i local economy. But there needs to be a way in which we reward and prioritize local farmers participating in these market.



Refining the Aloha 'Āina Economy: The Case for Agroforestry

By: Kalaninui Wilson

Protecting Hawai'i from invasive species through stronger biosecurity measures is essential to preserving native ecosystems, supporting local food systems, and ensuring a sustainable future for both people and the land.

Environmental & Ecological Resilience



GM Seed to Bee: The Honey Bee Queen Rearing Industry Shouldn't Exist

By: Jayde Addison

Hawai'i should promote more sustainable and locally adapted beekeeping practices that prioritize honey bee health, genetic diversity, and long-term resilience over industrialized production systems.



Protect Our Plants and Prevent Their Pests

By: Katelyn Pratte

Protecting Hawai'i from invasive species through stronger biosecurity measures is essential to preserving native ecosystems, supporting local food systems, and ensuring a sustainable future for both people and the land.



Land Use & Agricultural Policy



Where Renewable Energy and Food Security Meet: A Case for Careful Management of Agrivoltaics in Hawai'i

By: Bianca West

Agrivoltaics offers Hawai'i a sustainable way to strengthen both food and energy security, but its growth must be guided by equitable policies that protect local communities and farmland.



Is golf good for Hawaii?

By: Jaymehn Rita

We should reevaluate the how lands for golf courses should be repurposed to better support long-term sustainability for our food system and public well-being.

Farm to School



School lunch program: Free for all?

By: Beverly Patton

Hawai'i should prioritize universal free school meals because food insecurity harms students' ability to learn and thrive, making equitable access to nutritious meals a critical educational and social responsibility.



Hawai'i's School Meals Should Feed Our Children and Our Farmers

By: Mahealani Pudiquet

Prioritizing locally sourced food in Hawai'i's public school meals can strengthen food security, support local farmers, and build a more resilient and sustainable future for Hawai'i's communities.

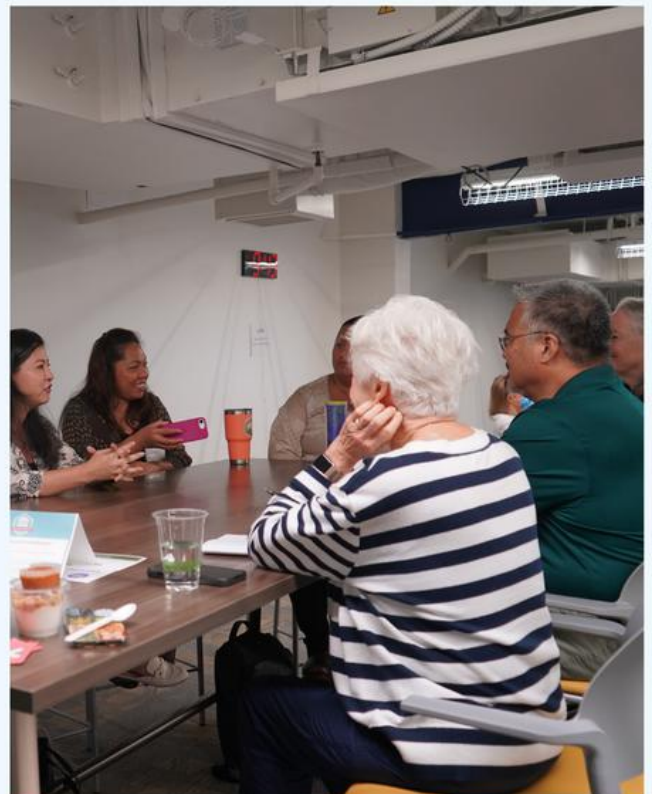
Emergency Preparedness



Emergency Preparedness Without Food Security Is Not Preparedness

By: Mahealani Pudiquet

Emergency preparedness in Hawai'i continues to focus heavily on evacuation plans and shelters but needs to work on one of the most essential needs: food accessibility.



Transportation Oriented Development



There is No Food Security without Transportation Security.

By: Jesse Mashburn

Access to public transportation is an important factor to different communities access to food in O'ahu.

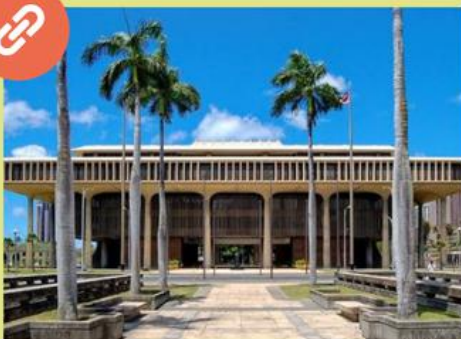


Rewilding the Department of Transportation; Getting Pesticides Out

By: Maureen Smith

The Department of Transportation responsibility shouldn't only be to fix our potholes but to also to manage our plants and landscapes pesticides free.

Legislation



You Can't Build Hawai'i's Future Food System Without Data

By: Isabel Cossio

Many of the most important pieces of data needed to guide agricultural policy, infrastructure investment, and farmer decision-making are either incomplete or entirely missing.



Im Just a Bill... That Doesn't Work: The Illusion of Lawmaking and Why Passing a Bill isn't Enough

By: Kaikaina kenike Allen

While passing a bill is an important step, meaningful change can only happen with dilligent accountability and implementation of these bills

PROTECT WAI



PUNAWAI

KANAWAI

MULIWAI

WAIWAI

From Our Interns '26

"This work has clarified the kind of role I want to pursue: one at the intersection of food systems, community advocacy, and policy"



"Learning how testimony works and how community voices shape the legislative record has been especially empowering, making civic engagement feel accessible and showing me that people from nontraditional policy backgrounds can engage meaningfully."

"Ultimately, this experience has given me tools, language, and questions that will continue shaping how I engage with food, land, and justice in the years to come"



"Tracking bills and writing testimony has made legislation feel tangible; small changes in language, funding, or referrals can meaningfully impact farmers, schools, families, and local food economies"

"Before this internship, I did not know much about the legislative process and how a bill becomes law... learning about this process motivates me more to pursue a career in policy now that I am starting to understand the logistics and it doesn't seem as overwhelming the more I learn"



"Through this internship, I've learned how policy quietly but powerfully shapes nearly every part of the food system, from access to land and infrastructure, to who can farm, and which communities receive public investment"



