

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 1243

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 22 2023

RE: H.B. No. 971  
H.D. 2

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Thirty-Second State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2023  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Agriculture and Environment, to which was referred H.B. No. 971, H.D. 2, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL LOANS,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Establish the Agricultural Emergency Loan Revolving Fund, to be administered by the Department of Agriculture, to fund Class D emergency loans; and
- (2) Appropriate funds for the Agricultural Emergency Loan Revolving Fund.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Agriculture; Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.; Ulupono Initiative; Hawai'i Farm Bureau; and one individual.

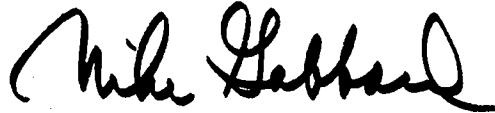
Your Committee finds that climate change-related and economic disasters now occur with greater frequency and create added hardship onto already struggling farm and ranch operations throughout the State. The Department of Agriculture supplies loans to farmers who have not been able secure funding elsewhere, but draws from a fund that is barely sufficient to meet demand. Thus, the Department of Agriculture has not been able to reserve any funds specifically for emergency or disaster relief loans.



Your Committee further finds that during the 2022 Regular Session, the Legislature provided a one-time appropriation of \$1,500,000 for emergency loans to assist farmers and ranchers in the County of Maui adversely affected by drought and axis deer. However, the Department of Agriculture remains severely limited due to the lack of a dedicated and readily available emergency loan funding source. Therefore, this measure creates a revolving fund dedicated to funding agricultural emergency loans and appropriates funds to bolster the Department's ability to offer financial assistance.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture and Environment that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 971, H.D. 2, and recommends that it pass Second Reading and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Agriculture and  
Environment,



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MIKE GABBARD, Chair



