

June 5, 2025, 9 a.m.  
Kalana O Maui Building

**To: Maui County Council Committee on Agriculture, Diversification, Environment and Public Transportation**  
**Gabe Johnson, Chair**  
**Shane Sinenci, Vice Chair**

**From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii**  
**Jonathan Helton, Policy Analyst**

Re: Bill 75 (2025) — RELATING TO THE COMPREHENSIVE ZONING ORDINANCE ON AGRICULTURAL TOURISM

Aloha Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Sinenci and other members of the Committee,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** [Bill 75 \(2025\)](#), which would allow agricultural tourism activities as an accessory use in agricultural districts.

The bill includes a list of activities that would be considered agricultural tourism, such as gift shops, lei making, carving, coffee roasting and tasting, living history demonstrations and wayfinding using the stars.

Grassroot believes this measure would enable Maui's farmers and ranchers to diversify their income sources and foster small-scale entrepreneurship. Agriculture-based tourism activities could help offset the cost of farming or ranching, and would promote Hawaii-made goods to visitors and locals.

Likewise, this bill would let more Maui residents participate in tourism, the island's biggest economic engine.

As the bill points out, these changes are in accordance with the Countywide Policy Plan and the Maui Island Plan, both of which emphasize the need to promote the teaching of traditional practices and the diversification of the tourism industry.

The Maui Department of Agriculture's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan also emphasizes the importance of this approach. It states that "to expand agritourism on the island of Maui, efforts could be made to develop and promote agritourism infrastructure, such as farm stays, campgrounds and event venues; this would allow

visitors to experience the daily workings of farms and ranches, and provide more opportunities for educational workshops and hands-on experiences.”<sup>1</sup>

The draft Maui County Food and Nutrition Security Plan recognizes the potential of agritourism. Its Goal 3 relates to vibrant local food economies, and states: “When appropriate, encourage forms of agritourism that support agricultural education opportunities for the community and help to connect residents to their food system.”<sup>2</sup>

However, Grassroot does have concerns about some of the proposed amendments to the bill.

One amendment would remove nighttime activities as a permitted use. Grassroot believes that allowing tourism activities related to “traditional or ancestral activities related to the location and movement of celestial and elemental bodies,” would educate visitors about the importance of stars and wayfinding, deepening their appreciation for Hawaiian culture.

Another amendment would require approval from the Department of ‘Ōiwi Resources for any traditional or cultural-related activities. Grassroot does not object to this amendment, but the department should have a set timeline — such as 10 business days — within which to approve agricultural tourism applications. This would give Maui farmers and entrepreneurs greater certainty when setting up their businesses.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Jonathan Helton  
Policy Analyst  
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

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<sup>1</sup> “[County of Maui Department of Agriculture \(MDOA\) 2024–2028 Strategic Plan](#),” Maui Department of Agriculture, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> “[Maui County Food and Nutrition Security Plan](#),” Second Draft for Public Comment, Maui Department of Agriculture, December 2024, p. 32.