



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
And

Senate Committee on Higher Education
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HB 889 HD1 – RELATING TO PESTICIDES

Chairs Gabbard and Kahele, Vice Chairs Riviere and Kidani, and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment and Committee on Higher Education:

Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments on HB 889 HD1, which increases the pesticide licensing fee and amends authorized uses for moneys in the pesticide use revolving fund; and establishes an environmental toxicologist position within the department of agriculture and a pesticide extension specialist, through a contract with the department of agriculture, within the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR).

While we defer to the Department of Agriculture on the fiscal and management implications HB 889 HD1 within the department, and have no wish to limit ongoing training efforts by the department, we strongly support the self-funded partnership proposed in this measure between the Department of Agriculture and the University of Hawai'i in order to comprehensively address pesticide education, training and monitoring in the State of Hawai'i.

As written, this bill would increase infrastructure within both the Department of Agriculture and the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, to address this area of much concern to both the agricultural community and the public at large. This would be done through user fees, at no cost to the State general fund.

As stated in HB 889 HD1, in complementation to the pesticide applicator certification training undertaken by the Department of Agriculture, a pesticide extension specialist with the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources would focus on development and dissemination of educational materials; collaborating in planning and

design of projects to develop integrated pest management methods and limit pesticide drift; and exploring other partnerships to provide funding for these activities. Beyond this, a pesticide extension specialist also addresses education of farmers and other users in proper choice of pesticides for different pests and purposes; integration of pesticides with other non-chemical pest control methods in order to minimize pesticide use and environmental exposure; extension of new research results to help farmers change and adapt their pest control practices; and education of the public on pesticide risks and benefits, and response to public concerns.

We have no doubt that the activities of the pesticide extension specialist would lead to additional federal funding to Hawai'i, and more comprehensive education and training efforts than can be accomplished by either the Department or the University in isolation. For example, prior to his retirement a decade ago, Dr. Barry Brennan held a comparable position at the University and was successful in obtaining grant funds from US EPA and USDA to found and support immigrant farmer training in pesticide safety and effective pest management. Through distribution of educational materials, Dr. Brennan was also active in public education, including mitigating public concerns during the heptachlor emergency of the 1980s.

Without a funding mechanism such as that proposed in HB 889 HD1, a university pesticide extension specialist position is now difficult to justify in a time of fiscal austerity at the University of Hawai'i. While addressing a local need, such a position may not directly contribute to student tuition revenues that are a significant part of current university budget models. Thus, we would be glad to partner with the Department of Agriculture on this comprehensive approach to pesticide education and training, if the department views HB 889 HD1 as a viable approach.