



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
February 16, 2017 at 2:04 p.m.

By
Maenette Benham, Chancellor
University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu

HB 1279 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Hashem, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu (UHWO) supports HB 1279, which would appropriate funds to expand the existing educational programming in Sustainable Community Food Systems at UHWO in order to increase food security, self-sufficiency, economic development and food system resiliency in the State of Hawai'i.

The pressing social and ecological issues facing food systems today are complex and interrelated, defying single disciplinary solutions. Systematically advancing the goals of food security, resiliency and equity in Hawai'i will require educating new generations of food system professionals to think across traditional disciplinary boundaries to actively engage real-world challenges. The Sustainable Community Food System Program at UHWO provides a rich experiential, applied and multi-disciplinary undergraduate education that develops student comprehension of interrelated ecological and social issues in agriculture such that they may begin formulating meaningful responses to these challenges. Through a holistic study of the food system, the SCFS degree aims to develop highly skilled and civic-minded graduates prepared to advance the sustainable food and agriculture sector through new businesses and social enterprises, and preparing students for graduate-level training in disciplines such as Education, Hawaiian Studies, Natural Resource Management, Political Science or Urban and Regional Planning at UH Mānoa.

UHWO supports the following provisions of Section 2 of HB 1279:

1. Establishing scholarships for students to enroll in the Sustainable Community Food Systems program at the University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu.

The BAS-SCFS at UHWO will provide a world-class education to the historically underserved Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population of West O'ahu. The SCFS program is designed to serve the NHPI population through the integrative study of traditional ecological knowledge and modern science with the objective of stewarding the agricultural resources of Hawai'i over the long-term. A scholarship program for SCFS will help assist adult learners in West O'ahu to access culturally relevant options in higher education while meeting state priorities.

2. Creating job opportunities and on-site training by creating positions for a full-time garden manager and part-time student assistants for the Student Organic Garden at the University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu.

The Student Organic Garden has grown to be a popular and dynamic living laboratory for the entire UHWO campus. Classes in SCFS, Mathematics, Political Science, Education and Hawaiian and Pacific Studies now regularly use the garden for experiential and hands-on learning. The garden serves hundreds of undergraduate and public school students each year. A permanent full-time garden manager position and part-time student employee positions for the garden will enable UHWO to continue to offer a wide range of high quality educational programming in sustainable horticulture, home gardening, cooking and nutrition.

3. Creating a Hawaiian Center for Sustainable Community Food Systems, a two hundred-acre education, training, outreach, food processing, and applied research center.

The UHWO Hawaiian Center for Sustainable Community Food Systems (HCSCFS) is a 200-acre multi-disciplinary and applied education center dedicated to advancing food security and sustainable economic development of the food system of Hawai'i and the Pacific. Through multiple program areas including certified organic production, youth leadership training, undergraduate and graduate education, organic farmer training, K-12 education, public workshops, food processing and applied agro-ecology research, the HCSCFS will provide the necessary educational and physical infrastructure to achieve a more sustainable, resilient and secure food system for the state of Hawai'i.

4. Establishing a series of Hawai'i State Teachers Association professional development days with O'ahu high schools to encourage education and understanding of sustainable food systems.

The development of a series of professional development (PD) opportunities in sustainable food systems for public secondary school teachers will serve to enhance teacher capacity and student learning outcomes within food, agriculture and natural resource sciences. Through PD experiences, teachers will develop their capacity to provide experiential and hands-on instruction that engages the next generation of high school students in understanding issues of ecological and social sustainability in the food system, and explore career opportunities in the State of Hawai'i for students interested in sustainable food systems. Together, these outcomes will feed into the broader goal of strengthening the pathway into post-secondary education and preparing local students for future leadership and support services connected to agriculture science and the sustainable food and agriculture sector in the State.

5. Implementing research projects, hosting conferences, and employing additional staff and faculty as the director of the program deems necessary.

To build upon prior success, the SCFS program is seeking additional funding to support applied agro-ecology and food system research, promote popular understanding of critical agriculture and food issues through public education, and build the SCFS program curriculum in the fields of indigenous natural resources management and epidemiology, public health and nutrition through the hiring of additional faculty members.

On behalf of the University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu, we thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1279.