



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
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HB 2099 HD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the House Committee on Finance:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2099 HD1. We are in full agreement that Hawai'i must entertain alternatives to its current agricultural operations. These alternatives should add to the diversity of agricultural systems that operate in the state. There is significant potential to grow food in an urban environment. The positive outcomes of successful urban operations are several. First, the food that is being grown in an urban environment is in the population centers where the food demand exists. In fact, this is one tool for addressing food deserts in urban areas. Second, because of the location, transportation costs may be minimized. Third, there are possibilities in increasing efficiencies. However, there are down sides as well with the energy consumption being the greatest.

Vertical farming, the one option mentioned in the bill, is one component that fits into a general description of protective agriculture. Protected Ag, or “the modification of the natural environment to achieve optimal growth” is an approach that we feel is a potential future for Hawai'i. Beyond vertical farming, we also support low/high tunnels and greenhouse culture for appropriate crops.

Section 2. We feel that the term ag-tech could use a more complete definition in the bill. This term has been used in a variety of fashions including “transforming the global food system” to “getting smarter using digital technology”. We would suggest something such as: “using the latest technology addressing protected agriculture”. With a solid definition, the Department of Agriculture (DOA) will have a better sense of their mission. This definition also seems consistent with the vision of vertical farming stated in the bill, but expands it to cover all of protected ag.

Section 3. We see value in all aspects of this section.

Section 4. We see value in all aspects of this section

Section 5. CTAHR is capable of participating given the appropriate resources to adequately meet the mission objectives.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 2099 HD1.