



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs
and
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
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HB 2099 HD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairs Nishihara and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Wakai and Riviere, and members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs and Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2099 HD1. We continue to be in full agreement with this revision, and that Hawai'i must entertain alternatives to its current agricultural operations. These alternatives should add to the diversity of current agricultural systems that operate in the state and not with an eye to supplant those systems. 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. We agree that the feasibility plan needs to provide a critical economic evaluation of the start-up costs and maintenance costs of any urban agriculture plan. It should be noted that there will be significant start-up costs/investments in any program.

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.

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

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

Section 5. The College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa is capable of participating given the appropriate resources to adequately meet the mission objectives. The phrase "cooperate and provide necessary resources as requested by the department of agriculture" should read "cooperate with the department of agriculture where necessary resources are provided by HB 2099 HD1".

We support HB 2099 HD1 with the caveat that it does not affect, and is in addition to, the UH budget request. We also support it if the funding is adequate to allow CTAHR to be engaged. We also defer to the Department of Agriculture (DOA) as per their ability to accomplish the mission objectives given the appropriated resources and their consideration of the DOA mission.