



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
And
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Tuesday, February 7, 2017 at 1:00 p.m.
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SB 806 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII COLLEGE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN RESOURCES COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 806, which appropriates funds to the UH Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources cooperative extension service for one full-time ornamental plant extension agent

We strongly support this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Executive Biennium Budget.

The Cooperative Extension Service is the means by which the Land Grant university system extends the results of research to directly assist agriculture and the public in each state. Among the 50 states, Hawai'i is virtually unique in supporting agricultural research and extension, along with all other university functions, solely through the single budget line of the University of Hawai'i. In recognition of the unique nature and societal significance of agricultural extension and agricultural research, other states choose to provide a budget line specifically for these core Land Grant University activities. In the absence of such a funding mechanism, extension service functions potentially suffer to a greater extent than other university functions during periods of fiscal austerity. Tuition-driven university budget models can also have the unforeseen effect of disadvantaging extension functions.

Hawai'i is also unique among all the states in that the four county governments make no set contribution to the base costs of extension services within the county. Several

provide some annual grant funding, which is greatly appreciated, but core infrastructure support is absent.

As a result of the above-described factors, the extension faculty workforce in the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources has decreased 43% over the past 20 years, and 27% over the past six years alone. Retirements and resignations are a normal occurrence, but the present budget situation prevents replacement of many vacant positions. Again, a focus on university budget reductions and increasing tuition revenue does not support extension staffing at optimal levels. In recognition of this situation, the Legislature provided funding for four extension agent positions, representing half of the number requested, in the Regular Session of 2015, specifically to assist with food crops.

Extension assistance is also critical to growers of ornamental plants and the landscape industry in Hawai'i. Floriculture and nursery crops represent a \$67 million industry in the state, and was estimated at almost a \$20 million farm gate value on Oahu alone in 2012. Although CTAHR has continued to provide Oahu growers and landscapers with assistance as best we can since the retirements of the two dedicated O'ahu-based ornamental agents six and eight years ago, there is a strong need for an extension agent with this specialty based on O'ahu, and also offering assistance statewide.

SB 806 strengthens the extension infrastructure in Hawai'i and addresses agricultural and landscape industry needs by appropriating funds for the biennium to support an O'ahu-based ornamental plant extension agent position.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 806.