Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
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SB 3030 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Riviere, and members of the committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the over-all concept of SB 3030 which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture for establishing a farmer mentor program, as well as curriculum development for the program in the area of whole farm systems.

CTAHR strongly supports a whole farm system approach that focuses on maintaining and enhancing soil health. Whole farm systems include the diverse approaches to agriculture ranging from certified organic farming to integrated livestock/farming. The basic component of these systems is sustainable soil organic matter management, combined with integrated pest management under a verifiable economic umbrella. They typically include conservation tillage, cover crops and a well-designed cropping system.

Another important aspect of this curriculum should be teaching the economics of scale in order to assure that the farmers being trained in the program understand that a commercial operation has to be a certain size in order to become profitable (depending on the value of the crop), particularly given the costs of production involving food safety regulations. A whole farm system has the opportunity to lower the production inputs, hence making the operation more commercial.

We also suggest that a necessary component of a whole farm system curriculum is that it be based on well-documented science that passes the test of the peer review system.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the over-all concept of the bill, but leave it to the Department of Agriculture to decide if this is within its mission.