



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
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SB 752 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 752 relating to agriculture and ornamental ginger and which appropriates \$200,000 for fiscal years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 for statewide research and prevention of the spread of ornamental ginger pathogens. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) supports this bill and we respectfully provide the following information to substantiate our position.

SB 752 is an example of the biosecurity issues facing agriculture in Hawai'i. Ornamental ginger is a valued plant that can be used as a shrub or as a cut flower. CTAHR scientists have been able to identify three different viruses and one fungal pathogen that are infecting ornamental ginger. In addition, the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) scientists have identified the presence of fourteen additional pathogens. At this time, it is not known which agent(s) is/are the primary cause of the decline being seen in ginger, and which are secondary pathogens infecting a weakened plant. Another question is whether the problem will expand to other islands; raising the possibility of a quarantine of ornamental ginger on Oahu.

It is the consensus of CTAHR and HDOA scientists that more diagnostics and a statewide survey is needed before quarantine should be considered. The HDOA has already provided funds of approximately \$120,000 in FY 2019 to address the situation and work has begun. An additional \$200,000 is being requested in this bill in order to complete the diagnostics, conduct a statewide survey, and to subsequently investigate the dieback issue and its solution.

Biosecurity issues like this happen. We never know when they will occur, what will be the scope of the problem, what may be the cause of the problem, and what will be the resulting solution. CTAHR's budget within UHM is not equipped to consistently address such issues. While we have the expertise in both research and extension, the funding is unavailable. This bill addresses that lack of funding for fiscal years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021; and hopefully brings this issue to a successful conclusion.

We support this bill provided that its passage is in addition to priorities as indicated in our Board of Regent Approved Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.