HB 2145 HD 1: Relating to Agricultural Tourism

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee Judiciary

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by

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Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Oshiro, and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to contribute the expertise of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) to provide input to the decision-making process on House Bill 2145.

I am in support of HB 2145, with concerns. This bill allows agricultural tourism conducted on an existing working farm or an existing farming operation, provided that the agricultural tourism activity is accessory and secondary to the principal agricultural use and does not interfere with surrounding farm operations.

I strongly support agri-tourism as an avenue for farmers and ranchers to diversify their operations. As Hawaii is known as a vacation destination, we should also be taking advantage of the many visitors coming to Hawaii looking for Hawaiian agricultural experiences.

However, there is concern that some counties do not currently have the ability to enforce existing land use ordinances in agricultural areas. Abuses in agricultural districts have existed for many years with little enforcement by the counties. It is difficult to support the expanded role of the counties when they are not enforcing existing laws.

Thus, while I do have concerns, I would like to respectfully suggest that this bill be amended to allow only those counties who have approved ordinances specifically regulating agri-tourism that clearly articulate the enforcement process to qualify under this Act.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.