



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committees on Health and Agriculture
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by
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SB 131 – RELATING TO FOOD LABELING

Chairs Green and Ruderman, Vice Chairs Wakai and Riviere, and members of the committees:

The University of Hawai'i is opposed to the current language of SB 131 and has particular concerns regarding the ability and cost to the state to verify and enforce the conditions for labeling set forth under this bill. The University's objections are based on technical and scientific aspects of the current language of the bill and not in the broader social issue of product labeling, to which we remain neutral.

In SB 131's proposed language for a new section of HRS §328-, more thought must be given to the unintended consequences of the overly broad definition of what would constitute a "genetically engineered material" as some of the materials identified in this section would in fact contain no genetic material or DNA. For example, the sugars or oils derived from a genetically engineered plant contain no DNA or proteins (and therefore no genetically engineered material) and are indistinguishable from sugar or oil produced from a non-GE plant. As a result, products produced with these ingredients would not have any trace of genetically engineered material in the final product.

The bill instructs the Director of Health to 'adopt rules, pursuant to Chapter 91, necessary for the purposes of this section, including rules for the testing of foods to determine the presence and content of 'genetically engineered material'. However, in the instance described above, and in potentially many other cases, there is simply no testing available that would allow the state to detect 'genetically engineered material' as defined in this bill.

The University's final concern is that no agency has been identified and no funding is proposed for the testing of food products and enforcement of the proposed rules.

UH will continue to offer testimony to assist the legislature in developing effective and responsible legislation and we appreciate the opportunity present testimony on the technical merits of this bill.