



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture
and

House Committee on Economic Development and Business
Friday, March 22, 2019 at 9:35 a.m.

By

Nicholas Comerford

Dean, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

And

Michael Bruno

Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Vice Chancellor for Research

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HCR 126/HR 116 – URGING THE GOVERNOR, THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII COLLEGE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN RESOURCES, AND OTHER RELATED ENTITIES TO TAKE ACTION TO HELP EXPAND THE AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY IN THE STATE

Chairs Creagan and McKelvey, Vice Chairs DeCoite and Kitagawa, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and House Committee on Economic Development and Business:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HCR 126/HR 116. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) supports the overall intent of the resolution but provides comments in order to explain the current situation and how it affects the intent of the resolution.

- CTAHR supports the portion of the resolution that urges CTAHR to help expand the aquaculture industry.
- Currently, CTAHR employs a faculty member engaged in aquaculture research who has been successful in bringing to the State of Hawai'i significant funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Health in support of aquaculture. He is engaged in basic research on fish physiology under aquaculture that will advance our knowledge in that area for future development.
- CTAHR has combined with the School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology to jointly fund an Extension Specialist in aquaculture. The hiring of that Extension Specialist is currently in progress.
- CTAHR is developing an aquaculture research facility in Mānoa to support the work of both faculty members in order to train students and to engage in meaningful aquaculture research.

- The Center for Tropical and Subtropical Aquaculture has recently been transferred to CTAHR from Hawai'i Pacific University. This will help further aquaculture research and outreach not only in Hawai'i but in the Pacific Basin
- CTAHR has recently hired Extension Agents (funded by the FY 2018 Legislature) in Economics and Finance which will provide expertise to individuals interested in starting an aquaculture and/or aquaponics business.

For these reasons, we strongly support the first part of this resolution. We believe that aquaculture has tremendous potential to meet the protein needs of the state. To this end we are reorienting our limited resources to improve our aquaculture presence and, at the same time, we appear to be meeting the intent of this resolution.

The second resolution requests CTAHR to transfer specific parcels of land to the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) for the purpose of establishing aquaculture production on those lands. It is our understanding that the parcels outlined in the resolution are part of the CTAHR Waiale'e Livestock Experiment Center on the North Shore of O'ahu.

- Negotiations are currently under way with ADC for the transfer of the entire Experiment Center, not just those specific parcels
- Once the land is transferred to ADC, CTAHR will no longer have any say in how the land would be used. Therefore, the use for aquaculture will be the purview of ADC at that time. CTAHR would not have responsibility for addressing the use requested in this resolution
- ADC has been in conversations with the North Shore community which has strong ideas of how that land should be used. Including input from the community in the resolution would be beneficial to enhancing the acceptance of any aquaculture industry that may be installed in that area.

With this in mind, we make the following suggestion for the resolution:

Consider verbiage that includes the North Shore community in the decision-making process.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the resolution.