



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
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by
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HB 1568 HD2 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on HB 1568 HD2. This bill would amend Act 176, SLH 2021, by changing the requirement of all state departments to ensure that a certain percentage of food purchased consists of fresh, local agricultural products or local value-added, processed, agricultural, or food products to apply only to the DOE, DOH, PSD, and UH System.

The University wholeheartedly supports the growth of local agriculture in our state in an effort to reduce our dependence on importing food and contribute to the State's economy. However, most, if not all, of the University's food contracts with vendors are concession-type agreements that support a business model in which the food service provider conducts business with the end consumer. As such, a strict requirement to purchase locally sourced food or agricultural products primarily impacts the end consumer, namely students, by passing on higher costs.

Furthermore, the University is concerned that its ability to source food locally will be restricted by the availability of the local food supply. As such, purchasing up to 50% of its food locally may be unachievable. Some of the University's contracts with vendors have already implemented a "local first" policy. However, at best, this results in approximately 30% of food purchased locally due to supply constraints. Additionally, there are a number of other challenges to purchasing food locally. For example, farms may not meet our vendors' required purchasing standards or be willing to complete the process to become an approved vendor, which is accompanied by insurance and distribution requirements; and the University's food needs are generally highest from Fall through Spring and lowest in the Summer, which is generally the peak of the local food supply.

Given that the University supports the intent of this bill, but has the above concerns, it respectfully requests the language of the bill be revised to either institute a local-first policy or allow for exceptions when it is not practicable to meet the local food requirements posed by this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.