



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
and
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
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By
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SB 484 – RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY

Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Ruderman, and members of the committees:

The University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu (UHWO) strongly supports SB 484, which would appropriate funds to expand the existing educational programming in Sustainable Community Food Systems (SCFS) at UHWO to contribute to increasing food security, sustainable economic development and food system resiliency and equity in the State of Hawai'i.

The pressing social and ecological issues facing food systems today are complex and interrelated, defying single disciplinary solutions. Systematically advancing the goals of food security, resiliency and equity in Hawai'i will require educating new generations of food system professionals to think across traditional disciplinary boundaries to actively engage real-world challenges. The Sustainable Community Food System Program at UHWO provides a rich experiential, applied and multi-disciplinary undergraduate education that develops student comprehension of interrelated ecological and social issues in agriculture such that they may begin formulating meaningful responses to these challenges. Through a holistic study of the food system, the SCFS degree aims to develop highly skilled and civic-minded graduates prepared to advance the sustainable food and agriculture sector through new businesses and social enterprises, and preparing students for graduate-level training in disciplines such as Education, Hawaiian Studies, Natural Resource Management, Political Science or Urban and Regional Planning at UH Mānoa.

UHWO supports the following key provisions of SB 484:

Establishing scholarships for students to enroll in the Sustainable Community Food Systems program at the University of Hawai'i - West O'ahu. The SCFS Program at UHWO provides a world-class education to the historically underserved Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population of West O'ahu. The SCFS program is designed to serve the NHPI population through the integrative study of traditional ecological knowledge and modern sciences with the objective of training young leaders to be stewards of the food and agricultural resources of Hawai'i over the long-term. A scholarship program for SCFS will help assist adult learners from West O'ahu to access culturally-relevant options in higher education while advancing key state sustainability, food security and resilience priorities.

Creating job opportunities and on-site training by creating positions for a full-time garden manager and part-time student assistants for the Student Organic Garden at the University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu. The Student Organic Garden has grown to be a popular and dynamic living laboratory for the entire UHWO campus. Classes in SCFS, Mathematics, Political Science, Education and Hawaiian and Pacific Studies regularly use the garden for experiential and hands-on learning. The garden serves over 1000 undergraduate and public school students each year. A permanent full-time garden manager position and part-time student employee positions will enable UHWO to continue to offer a wide range of high quality educational programming in sustainable horticulture, home gardening, cooking and nutrition.

Implementing research projects, hosting conferences, and employing additional staff and faculty as the director of the program deems necessary. To build upon prior successes in research and education, the SCFS program is seeking funding to support applied agro-ecology and food system research, promote public understanding of critical food system issues, and build the SCFS program curriculum in the fields of ecology, indigenous natural resource management and public health through the hiring of additional faculty members.

On behalf of the University of Hawai'i - West O'ahu, we thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 484, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.