



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Friday, February 1, 2019 at 1:20 p.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

SB 1148 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Ruderman and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 1148 relating to agriculture. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources supports with suggested amendments the intent of this bill and we respectfully provide the following information to substantiate our position.

2018 was a difficult year for agriculture. Torrential rains hurt the taro and ornamental plant industries on Kaua'i and O'ahu. Volcanic eruption decimated approximately 50% of the papaya industry and severely hurt the orchid industry, while also having a negative effect on the bee industry. Multiple hurricanes compounded the problems as did frequent wildfires. Hawai'i needs to be prepared for the certain eventuality that this is a foreboding of disasters to come as our climate continues to change due to human influence.

Disaster relief generally follows a pattern: (1) search and rescue, (2) emergency relief, (3) early recovery, (4) medium to long-term recovery, and (5) community development. These steps pertain to agriculture with the exception of the first. Steps 2 and 3 need to happen as quickly as possible. This bill addresses step 3 - early recovery by providing grants and loans. Steps 4 and 5, medium and long-term recovery and addressing the effect these disasters have on the community should also be of concern, however, these steps are not addressed in this bill.

The use of the proposed funding for grants and loans for farmers and ranchers is not clear. Are they to be used for survival after the losses suffered by the farmers and ranchers, and to pay for losses such as heads of cattle (emergency relief)? Or are they

to be used for getting their business up and going as soon as possible (early recovery); or both? Clarification on this issue would be useful.

We support the intent of this bill and offer the following suggested amendments:

- clarify the use of the grants and loans or
- state that that clarification of use is to be determined by the Department of Agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.