



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
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By
Denise Eby Konan, PhD
Dean, College of Social Sciences
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 496 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 496. This measure establishes a task force to identify the top ten fruits or vegetables that are imported but may be commercially grown in the State. One of the members of the proposed task force is a representative from the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization (UHERO).

The University of Hawai'i supports development of agricultural resources, which may include identification of fruits or vegetables that may be grown commercially in the State. We also support careful cost-benefit analysis of any potential changes to Hawaii's tax code and the use of tax credits for policy objectives.

Analysis of both the agricultural component and the tax component of this measure is beyond the current capacity of the UHERO. UHERO is a very small research unit with only 4 FTE faculty working very hard to achieve our mission to inform public and private sector decision-making through rigorous, independent economic research on the people, environment, and economy of Hawai'i. It is understandable that UHERO would be considered as a source of expertise for this measure, but it is important to recognize that UHERO analyses and reports that may have focused on tax policy are uniformly authored by Emeritus and other experts that are not UHERO faculty. They are not available as members of such a task force. The tax analysis should be done by a faculty member with expertise in state and local public finance. Unfortunately, UHERO does not have any faculty members with such expertise. Furthermore, UHERO does not have any expertise in identification of the top ten imported fruits or vegetables that may be grown domestically. We respectfully ask that UHERO be removed from the bill.