



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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House Committee on Finance
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by
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HB 337, HD1, Relating to Agriculture

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

The purpose of HB 337, HD1 is to authorize the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) to use revenue bonds to purchase agricultural land, including in Kunia or 'Ewa, or both, on Oahu, appropriate funds to purchase the Kunia/'Ewa lands, enable the ADC to contract with banks to provide lease management services, and allow the ADC to lease agricultural lands in Kunia/'Ewa for up to 55 years.

The University supports HB 337, HD1.

Protecting important agricultural lands is fundamental to Hawai'i's future. Agriculture and its value-added products contribute \$2.4 billion to the state's economy and employ more than 38,000 people. Growing food locally improves our food security, and the production of biofuel and bioenergy crops has great potential for lessening our dependence on imported petroleum. In addition, farming supports our tourism industry by conserving green, open countryside that our visitors value.

Demand for residential development in Central O'ahu remains high. By enabling the ADC to purchase agricultural lands in Kunia, 'Ewa, or both and lease those lands for up to 55 years, HB 337, HD1 will ensure the long-term availability of these lands for farming and will support the continued growth of diversified agriculture in Hawai'i. The State of Hawai'i should purchase strategic parcels of important agricultural lands to assure that they remain in agriculture in perpetuity. Kunia and 'Ewa are among these important strategic areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.