



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 3:45 p.m.

by  
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### HB1663HD1 RELATING TO TARO SECURITY

The University of Hawai'i (UH) is sensitive to and mindful of the spiritual and cultural significance of taro in Hawai'i and believes that the compromises offered in HB1663HD1 provide a foundation upon which constructive work on known threats to taro can be conducted. However, from previous testimony on this bill we understand that the most significant issues affecting taro in Hawai'i, invasive species and diseases associated with imported taro and issues related to agriculture such as access to land, reduced numbers of farmers, water quality and loi health, are not being addressed by this legislation.

The UH must reiterate that research is not the problem nor is it a threat to Hawaiian taro. Research is not a cultural issue and we respectfully oppose the passage of this bill.

Nonetheless, the University of Hawai'i (UH) accepts and will abide by the compromise language of HB1663HD1 that prohibits the genetic modification of any Hawaiian taro varieties and restricts genetic modification and testing of non-Hawaiian taro to enclosed laboratories where entry into such a laboratory is prohibited to the general public.

The UH will continue to participate on the Taro Task Force in order to help farmers identify and implement solutions that will address the multitude of existing threats to taro in Hawaii. We believe it would be prudent for this Legislature to examine the outcomes of the Taro Task Force's efforts before supporting any further legislation regarding restrictions on taro research in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.