



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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By
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HB 1019 RELATING TO SUSTAINABILITY

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1019, Relating to Sustainability, I am Sylvia Yuen, Interim Dean and Director of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR).

Agriculture is an important contributor to Hawai'i's economy, but it also preserves green spaces and offers a connection to the culture, history, and lifestyle of our Island communities. There is a symbiotic relationship between agriculture and energy—agricultural products can be a source of energy, as in biofuels, and energy efficiencies in growing and processing food can enable agriculturists to reduce costs and become or remain economically viable. As the Food and Energy Security Act 73 (10) recognized, it is in the best interests of Hawai'i's people to build the state's capacity for self-sufficiency in its energy and food needs, as stated in the *Hawaii 2050 Sustainability Plan* and the *Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative*. There are, however, several longstanding issues that impede progress toward self-sufficiency in agriculture, including land, water, workforce development, public awareness and support, marketing and competitiveness, research and development, transportation and energy, food safety, bio-security, environmental concerns, and financing. All of the aforementioned require a long-term strategy, focused attention and action, consistent resources, and coordination among stakeholders. Unfortunately, progress in many of these areas has been slow or erratic because consistent and sufficient resources have not been available.

HB 1019 proposes to increase the allocated amount from \$0.15 to \$0.45 to both the energy security fund and the agricultural development and food security special fund. This will address the problem of inconsistent and/or lacking resources which has stunted the growth of agriculture in the state. For example, adoption of HB 1019 will make it possible to provide sustained investments and support for retaining and maintaining agriculture infrastructures, such as water storage capacity, conservation, and irrigation systems, as well as for capital improvement of dams and reservoirs. Although the proposed agricultural development and food security special fund will not be sufficient to build and maintain all of the state's water resources and infrastructure, the consistency and increased level of funding will enable considerable advancements to be made.

HB 1019 is critically important to the success of agriculture and moving Hawai'i toward greater food and energy self-sufficiency, and I support its adoption.