



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Finance  
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by

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and

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### HB 1534 HD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE INNOVATION

Chair Luke, Vice Chairs Nishimoto and Johanson, and members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 1534 HD1, which establishes an Agriculture Innovation Grant Program to fund agribusiness incubator programs to support start-up businesses in Hawai'i focused on feed production, food waste recycling, on-farm energy efficiency, and soil health and conservation, and food related agricultural activities.

We support this effort to support the incubator programs that are essential for agricultural start-ups to develop into successful businesses, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Executive Biennium Budget.

The grant-supported Agricultural Incubator Program (AIP) at the University of Hawai'i, housed within CTAHR and entirely supported to date by competitive federal funding, demonstrates the potential for such programs to help Hawai'i. Private efforts in Hawai'i to make food safety certified kitchen and food processing facilities available to new businesses have also proven quite popular.

Although it is suggested in the committee report that expertise on management of the program might be sought from the Agricultural Incubator Program (AIP) at the University of Hawai'i, we would defer to the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) for management of this new program in order to avoid any perceived conflict of interest. Since it is entirely grant supported, the AIP may well be a future applicant for support from the Agriculture Innovation Grant Program, since provision of support to programs such as AIP on a competitive basis is the purpose described in HB 1534 HD1.

As a minor point, we suggest clarification of the bill language to expressly name the Hawai'i High Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), and the Board of Directors of the HTDC as the managing entities for this new program. Although HB 1534 HD1 represents a revision of HRS 206-M, the managing entities are referred to generically in the current language as the "development corporation" and the "board" and HTDC is not specifically named.