



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Agriculture  
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by

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and

Maria Gallo / Testifier

Dean

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### HB 1536 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Wooley, Vice Chair Onishi, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1536, which proposes to establish an agricultural development and food security program for the state of Hawai'i by establishing state planning objectives to increase demand and access to locally grown foods, and establishing an on-farm mentoring program.

While we agree with the intent of HB 1536 to implement the strategic objectives identified in the October 2012 report on an *Increased Food Security and Food Self-Sufficiency Strategy*, we cannot support approval of the bill in its present form.

This bill appropriates funds for positions, planning and activities within the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture; and for agricultural research, training and education by the University of Hawai'i. Although we agree with these objectives, we do not believe that the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, is the appropriate entity to administer a new program of grants to individual farmers to serve as island-wide farming mentors, as required by HB 1536. Administration of grants to private businesses is a more appropriate activity for state agencies such as the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, or Department of Land and Natural Resources. As an academic unit within the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, CTAHR does not have infrastructure nor procedures in place to administer a program of grants to external parties.

We would also like to encourage the Committee members to consider an alternative to establishing an entirely new state-funded system of private farming mentors. The Cooperative Extension Service directed by CTAHR has been engaged in assisting and training farmers in Hawai'i for over 100 years, and instructional programs within the University of Hawai'i System, including CTAHR, provide formal training in the skills needed to succeed in Hawai'i's agricultural and food industries. Fiscal support for new

and ongoing agricultural training programs, including support for temporary and permanent staff positions, is much more likely in our view to pay greater dividends than a new system of private grants to facilitate mentoring.

We also note that HB 1536 quite rightly supports “expanding the farm food safety coaching program and number of farm food safety certifiers.” However, although funds are appropriated to the Department of Agriculture to increase the number of certifiers, no funds are appropriated specifically to expand the coaching program. This program has been developed and offered by CTAHR staff through extramural grant and contract support. Funding is currently lacking to continue these food safety coaching activities beyond the next few months. Thus, we suggest that provision of support for coaching activities be taken into consideration in any revision of HB 1536.

Although we cannot support HB 1536 in its present form, we certainly support the goals of increased food security and self-sufficiency, and hope that a revised version of this bill may be forthcoming.