



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education  
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by  
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Dean

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### HB 2007 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Choy, Vice Chair Ichiyama, and members of the House Committee on Higher Education, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2007, which appropriates \$150,000 to the Local & Immigrant Farmer Education (LIFE) Program of the University of Hawai'i CTAHR Cooperative Extension Service to support the growth and sustainability of the agriculture industry, effective July 1, 2014.

We strongly support this bill 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 Local and Immigrant Farmer Education (LIFE) program is under the direction of Cooperative Extension Service (CES) faculty within the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. LIFE serves socially disadvantaged and resource-limited producers, including recent immigrants from Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands with limited English skills, as well as Native Hawaiians, and women. More conventional farmers and ranchers also benefit from participation in program events. The goals of this program are to: 1) increase the viability and sustainability of commercial farms in Hawai'i, 2) integrate more farmers into mainstream agriculture, and 3) help drive Hawaii's diversified agricultural industry forward.

The LIFE program has been built on collaborative partnerships and on-farm interactions. Its team-based approach includes collaborative partnerships with CTAHR programs (Risk Management Hawai'i, Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program, Aquaponics and Hydroponics Program, Sustainable Pest Management Program, , Ag Incubator Program, Basil Swat Team, Go Farm Hawai'i, Hawai'i Tea Program, High Value Vaccinium Project, Honeybee Program, etc.), statewide Extension agents, UHM John A. Burns School of Medicine, agricultural agencies such as USDA (FSA, NRCS, etc.), Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, Hawai'i Department of Health, county agencies, Hawai'i Farm Bureau, Hawai'i Papaya Industry Association, Ka'u and Palehua coffee cooperative, Pacific Gateway Center, O'ahu RC&D, Ag Foundation, other public and private organizations and Hawaii's growers.

The reach of LIFE is statewide. For example, in FY2012 over 80 events and in FY2013 over 110 events were offered on all islands. Training opportunities address all aspects of successful farming, from soil fertility, crop production, aquaponics and pest management (including native-language workshops and educational materials) to distribution and marketing, record-keeping, and familiarization with government programs such as crop insurance, disaster assistance, and farm loans.

LIFE is a grant funded effort, supported by the efforts of the CTAHR CES faculty team to apply for and obtain additional extramural grants. HB 2007 would provide program support to sustain the LIFE program activities, which have perhaps never been more important than today. Currently food security, self-sufficiency and safety are paramount concerns, regulatory costs and requirements pose serious difficulties for all Hawai'i farmers, and particularly the disadvantaged and often struggling segments of our diversified, small-farm agricultural community served by LIFE.

Continued access to farm resources and educational support services in remote areas across the state through the LIFE program will help advance the sustainability of Hawai'i's diversified agricultural sector.

Thank you for the opportunity to express support for HB 2007.