



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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Senate Committee on Ways and Means
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by
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HB 2007 HD1 SD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Senate Committee Ways and Means, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2007 HD1 SD1, which appropriates funds to the Local and Immigrant Farmer Education (LIFE) Program of the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (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 under the direction of the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) faculty within the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, serves socially disadvantaged and resource-limited producers, including recent immigrants from Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands with limited English skills, Native Hawaiians, and women. 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 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, Aquaponics and Hydroponics Program, Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program, Ag Incubator Program, Honeybee Program, Basil Swat Team, Hawai'i Tea Program, High Value Vaccinium Project, etc.), statewide Extension agents, 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, O'ahu RC&D, Ag Foundation and other public and private organizations.

The reach of LIFE is statewide. For example, in FY2012, over 80 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, and risk management with crop insurance. Risk management workshops, in partnership with the Risk Management Hawai'i program and with external funds provided by the USDA Risk Management agency, have been extremely popular, and have helped disadvantaged farmers to navigate both natural disasters and such devastating invasive pest events as the coffee berry borer.

LIFE is a grant funded effort, initially supported in early years through funding from the US EPA, and the USDA, and in subsequent years by the efforts of the CTAHR CES faculty team to apply for and obtain additional extramural grants.

HB 2007 HD1 would provide program support to sustain the LIFE program activities, which have perhaps never been more important than today, at time when food security, self-sufficiency and safety are paramount concerns; and 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.

The amount of \$150,000 originally suggested in HB 2007 would support hire of an extension agent, support staff, and funding of interisland travel and operations.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our strong support for HB 2007 HD1 SD1.