



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Agriculture  
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By

Robert Bley-Vroman, Chancellor

And

Maria Gallo, Dean

And

J. Kenneth Grace, Associate Dean

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### HB 2676 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Tsuji, Vice Chair Onishi, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2676, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, Agricultural Incubator Program for the establishment of a five-year energy independent farming community pilot project.

Beginning farmers in Hawai'i face substantial difficulties in obtaining affordable land to farm that is accessible and has adequate infrastructure. Additionally, most new farmers must live in one location, and commute to their agricultural land. The lease or mortgage costs associated with maintaining two pieces of property (residence and farm), the costs of commuting, and high risk of agricultural vandalism and theft at unattended farm lots, make this a very difficult, if not impossible, situation for the future generation of farmers. The resulting decline in those entering farming and succeeding at it threatens the food security of Hawai'i.

HB 2676 proposes to investigate and implement a novel solution to this dilemma by establishing sustainable, energy-independent farming communities on state land. These communities would share central facilities, with homes located adjacent to each tenant's farm. Modern technologies make such essentially off-the-grid communities with alternative energy sources, water reuse, and small, low-cost housing units a viable proposition.

The Agricultural Incubator Program (AIP) has contributed to the business success of many small farmers and food producers in Hawai'i. Planning of such a farming community pilot project, including identification of economic and regulatory obstacles and possible solutions, is within the program's area of expertise. First year costs for planning and business plan development would be \$150,000 for AIP personnel and operational support. Other state agencies are expected to become involved as partners in subsequent years to address the business infrastructure and land stewardship needs of the pilot project.

The decline in new farmers is a serious issue for Hawai'i that demands novel approaches. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2676.