



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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SB 885, SD1, Relating to Education

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and Members of the Committee:

The purpose of SB 885, SD1 is to establish an agricultural and culinary education pilot program to encourage farming, diversified agriculture, and related industries as long-term career goals, teach students healthy eating habits, and address Hawaii's long-term food sustainability needs and to establish a comprehensive vocational agriculture and landscape education program in the public schools.

The University supports SB 885, SD1.

More than half of Hawai'i adults are overweight or obese, and in some Hawai'i communities the rate of obesity in children ages 6 to 11 is twice the national average. About three-quarters of Hawai'i residents don't eat enough fruits and vegetables. We can help our youngsters develop healthy, lifelong eating habits by teaching them how to grow and prepare fresh, wholesome food. Furthermore, an agricultural and culinary education program that teaches farming and cooking skills to our grade-school children will support the future growth of two valuable components of our economy: diversified agriculture, which lessens our dependence on imported food and improves our long-term food security, and our culinary industry, which contributes to our appeal as a tourist destination.

To expand and thrive, Hawaii's agricultural and landscape industries need qualified workers across a range of skill levels. The gross sales of landscape providers and the cost of in-house landscaping services were conservatively estimated at \$490 million in 2002. The landscape industry employs more than 10,000 individuals and is adding about 130 jobs per year. Diversified agriculture is also growing, reaching a record value of \$438 million in 2005. These green industries support and complement our tourism industry by creating beautiful destinations and recreational facilities and by conserving the green, open countryside that visitors to Hawai'i value.

An agriculture and landscape education program will support the growth of these industries by involving young people in the challenges and rewards of cultivating the land. The program will also help the University engage students, including those who might not otherwise pursue post-secondary education, to continue their agriculture and landscape studies at the college level, for example, in the agricultural sciences, in agribusiness, or in a landscape architecture program currently being developed at UH Mānoa. Many jobs available in the agricultural and landscape industries demand complex knowledge in diverse fields of expertise. By increasing educational opportunities at the secondary and post-secondary levels, this program will greatly benefit those industries.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.