



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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House Committee on Finance
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by
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SB 885, SD2, HD2, Relating to Education

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

The purpose of SB 885, SD2, HD2 is to expand the scope of the Agriculture Education Program in the public schools and establish the Agricultural and Culinary Education Program to grow a qualified workforce for the agriculture, culinary arts, and related industries, teach students healthy eating habits, and address Hawai'i's long-term food sustainability needs; and to appropriate funds.

The University supports SB 885, SD2, HD2.

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 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, Hawai'i'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 Agricultural and Culinary Education Program that encompasses farming, diversified agriculture, landscaping, aquaculture, culinary arts, and related industries such as market development and science and technology will support the growth of Hawai'i's agricultural industries by involving young people in the challenges and rewards of cultivation and production. The program will also help the University engage students, including those who might not otherwise pursue post-secondary education, to continue their studies at the college level, for example, in the agricultural sciences, food science, the culinary arts, or a landscape architecture program currently being developed at UH Mānoa. Many jobs available in the agricultural, landscape, and food industries demand complex knowledge in diverse fields of expertise. By increasing educational opportunities, an Agricultural and Culinary Education Program will greatly benefit those industries. CTAHR stands ready to consult with the Department of Education in the development and implementation of the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.