



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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and
Senate Committee on Education
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by
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SB 1757, Making an Appropriation to the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources for Biofuel Production Research

Chair Menor, Vice Chair Hooser, Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Tokuda, and Members of the Committees:

The purpose of SB 1757 is to make an appropriation for biofuels feedstock research.

The University supports the intent of SB 1757, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities expressed in our Board of Regents approved Biennium Budget request.

Hawai'i must move toward a more sustainable energy future. Ninety percent of the energy we use comes from imported fossil fuels. The percentage of our energy derived from petroleum is the highest of the 50 states, and our gasoline prices and electricity rates are among the highest in the nation. Our reliance on oil makes us acutely vulnerable to price spikes and sudden disruptions in supply.

The development of a bioenergy industry in Hawai'i holds great promise. Our state currently has about 100,000 acres of former sugarcane and pineapple land lying fallow. By growing fuel crops we can conserve these important agricultural lands while lessening our dependence on oil, conserving green, open space, and creating a more sustainable future.

Biofuels production requires a stable supply of feedstocks. At present, Hawai'i imports biofuels feedstocks to meet current mandates for gasoline content. Replacement of these imported feedstocks with feedstocks grown here will improve our energy security and move us closer to energy self-sufficiency.

Establishing of a biofuels industry in Hawai'i is a complex venture that will require not only agricultural and bioprocessing research but also assessment of how the industry

will affect our natural resources and our people. With extensive expertise in the areas of agricultural science, bioengineering, natural resources and environmental management, and family and community resources and demography, CTAHR is uniquely positioned to evaluate a wide range of technical, environmental, and social issues, including investigation of potential biofuel feedstocks, development of high-yielding feedstock, pre-commercial scale testing of high-potential feedstocks to ascertain production costs and yields, and assessment of industry impacts on land, water, air, the labor force, schools, community demographics, and other environmental and community concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.