



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented before the
Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
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by
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SB 239 – RELATING TO GENETICALLY ENGINEERED PLANTS

The University of Hawaii stands in opposition to SB 239.

The University's primary concerns are the threat to field research, vandalism and destruction of research crops as has happened during the development of the transgenic papaya. The requirement of disclosure of locations of field tests and production research crops would make these plants vulnerable to those that oppose this type of research. Furthermore, on February 2, 2009 a challenge for site disclosure of certain genetically modified plants was denied by the 9th Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals (see [Center for Food Safety et al. v Mike Johanns](#)). The court ruled that the sealing information regarding the location of field trials was justified because of risk of vandalism and the possibility that research findings would be disclosed or stolen.

This bill also mandates a burdensome reporting and notification process and allows unspecified rule-making with no apparent benefit. The reporting requirement is duplicative and unnecessary as it is already being conducted by the federal government under the Federal Plant Protection Act.

Most importantly however is the fact that genetically engineered crops do not pose a human health or safety risk. There has never been a documented case of any harm attributed to biotech crops anywhere in the world in the decades since genetically engineered crops have been introduced into the food supply. There have been no studies that indicate any greater hazards associated with the consumption of genetically engineered foods compared to conventionally or organically grown varieties. In fact, over the years as more research has been conducted, many jurisdictions have approved more crop varieties for human use and consumption. To require labeling of foods based on the process that was used to grow them would only add to consumer confusion and in the end, will provide little information that would assist consumers in making an informed decision on the healthful qualities and/or risk of using the product.

Procedures to prevent cross pollination are well known and part of standard agriculture practice. Legislation in this regard is unnecessary and superfluous.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.