



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
February 25, 2011 at 9:00am

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SB 722 SD1 – RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE, ENERGY, AND FOOD SECURITY TAX

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 722 SD1, Relating to the Environmental Response, Energy, and Food Security Tax. I am Sylvia Yuen, Interim Dean and Director of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR).

Agriculture is an important contributor to Hawai'i's economy, but it also preserves green spaces and offers a connection to the culture, history, and lifestyle of our Island communities. There is a symbiotic relationship between agriculture and energy—agricultural products can be a source of energy, as in biofuels, and energy efficiencies in growing and processing food can enable agriculturists to reduce costs and become or remain economically viable. As the Food and Energy Security Act 73 (10) recognized, it is in the best interests of Hawai'i's people to build the state's capacity for self-sufficiency in its energy and food needs, as stated in the *Hawaii 2050 Sustainability Plan* and the *Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative*. There are, however, several longstanding issues that impede progress toward self-sufficiency in agriculture, including land, water, workforce development, public awareness and support, marketing and competitiveness, research and development, transportation and energy, food safety, bio-security, environmental concerns, and financing. All of the aforementioned require a long-term strategy, focused attention and action, consistent resources, and coordination among stakeholders. Unfortunately, progress in many of these areas has been slow or erratic because consistent and sufficient resources have not been available.

SB 722 SD1 proposes to increase the allocated amount from \$0.15 to \$0.44 to both the energy security special fund and the agricultural development and food security special fund, and to allocate \$0.02 to fund the climate change task force. This will address the problem of inconsistent and/or lacking resources which has stunted the growth of agriculture in the state and slowed the adoption of alternative energy technologies which can reduce our dependence on imported oil. For example, adoption of SB722 SD1 will make it possible to provide sustained investments and support for retaining and

maintaining agriculture infrastructures, such as water storage capacity, conservation, and irrigation systems, as well as for capital improvement of dams and reservoirs. Although the proposed agricultural development and food security special fund will not be sufficient to build and maintain all of the state's water resources and infrastructure, the consistency and increased level of funding will enable considerable advancements to be made.

SB722 SD1 is critically important to the success of agriculture and moving Hawai'i toward greater food and energy self-sufficiency, and we support its adoption.