



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture
and

House Committee on Higher Education
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By

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And

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SCR 91, SD1 – ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP TO DISCUSS THE CREATION OF A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING OF THE HAWAII TEA INDUSTRY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LABELING REQUIREMENTS OF HAWAII-GROWN TEA.

Chairs Tsuji and Nishimoto, and members of the House Committees on Agriculture and Higher Education, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SCR 91, SD1.

I am Sylvia Yuen, Interim Dean and Director of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and this testimony is presented on behalf of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Last year, in 2011, CTAHR partnered with the UH-Mānoa Pacific Asian Center for Entrepreneurship (PACE), Shidler College of Business, to present research and produce a market feasibility study on developing Hawai'i-grown tea into a viable and sustainable agricultural industry for the State of Hawai'i. We engaged many stakeholders in this effort, including tea farmers and retailers, the Hawai'i Tea Society, and other members of the community.

A major finding of our report is that for the currently small and developing tea industry in Hawai'i to grow and for tea to become a sustainable specialty crop, Hawai'i-grown tea must be established as a premium product, both in terms of quality and in consumer association of "Hawai'i-grown" with that high quality. The perception of high quality can be diluted by use of the word "Hawai'i" on tea product labels that do not actually consist of tea grown in Hawai'i. These certainly may be quality products in their own right, but if they are not actually grown in Hawai'i and represent both the quality and price structure associated with Hawai'i-grown tea, the Hawai'i brand will be diluted.

SCR 91, SD1 will establish a committee to create a strategic plan for the development and marketing of the Hawai'i tea industry and make recommendations for labeling requirements—these actions are needed to guide the growth and accelerate the development of the industry. CTAHR is willing to participate on this committee, and to serve as either member or chair as the legislature deems appropriate. CTAHR strongly supports SCR 91, SD1.