



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
and

Senate Committee on Agriculture
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by
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SB 2039 MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII
COLLEGE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN RESOURCES
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE.

Chairs Taniguchi and Nishihara, Vice Chairs Kahele and Kouchi, and members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 2039, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i, CTAHR, for its cooperative extension service to improve education regarding agricultural science and food safety.

We strongly support this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Executive Biennium Budget.

The Legislature and the people of Hawai'i have an increasing sense of urgency with respect to food security. This includes a need for accelerated training to assist new farmers, with an emphasis on farming practices that may Hawai'i's need for imported and expensive farming inputs; and a concomitant need to ensure that appropriate good agriculture practices are followed and safe food reaches our plates. In order to reduce our reliance on imported food, and ensure that farming in Hawai'i remains a viable occupation in the face of both increased input costs and increased costs associated with farm food safety regulation, while also ensuring that Hawai'i's agricultural products are safe to consume and of high quality requires a two-prong approach on the part of the Cooperative Extension Service: our farmers need to be well-trained in both farm production and in practices that will ensure the safety of the food they produce without increasing production costs unreasonably.

The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) directed by the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, has been assisting and training farmers in Hawai'i for 100 years. As a land-grant institution, CTAHR has three missions: instruction, research, and extension. CTAHR CES extension faculty have partnered with research and instructional faculty in

comprehensive farmer training programs such as GoFarm Hawai'i, a joint effort with Windward Community College.

The farm food safety coaching program conducted by CTAHR CES faculty has provided personalized workshops and training in good agricultural practices to ensure safe food production, and one-one-one coaching to prepare farmers for the third-party food safety audits that are increasingly required by major retailers.

There is a definite need to ramp up these training efforts in response to increased interest in such professional training programs by farming organizations such as Hawai'i Farmers Union United and the Hawai'i Farm Bureau Federation, and in response to declining extramural funding to support the food safety coaching program and food safety education in general. Within CTAHR, these efforts have been supported largely by state and federal funding sources, and such support is always temporal and has largely come to an end at this time.

SB 2039 would stimulate an increase in agricultural education programming in Hawai'i, and allow continuation of food safety training and coaching programs while more stable sources of long-term funding are being established. For example, CTAHR is currently in the final recruitment steps for an Agrosecurity faculty position within the Department of Plant and Environmental Protection Sciences, which will both help to anchor these efforts as a permanent part of the CTAHR mission and assist in obtaining federal and other extramural support for food safety and security programs, both research and extension. Passage of SB 2039 will increase and sustain current agricultural and food safety education efforts, and provide a platform for further program growth.

Thank you again for the opportunity to express our support for SB 2039.