



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Health
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by
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SB2736 – RELATING TO FOOD LABELING

Chair Green, Vice Chair Baker, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i is opposed to the current language of SB2736 and has particular concerns regarding the ability and cost to the state to verify and enforce the conditions for labeling set forth under this bill. The University's objections are based on technical and scientific aspects of the current language of the bill and not in the broader social issue of product labeling, to which we remain neutral.

In SB2736's proposed language for a new section of HRS §328-, more thought must be given to the unintended consequences of the overly broad definition of what would constitute a 'genetically engineered material' as some of the materials identified in this section would in fact contain no genetic material or DNA (e.g. sugar from a genetically engineered plant) or have no trace of genetically engineered material in the product (e.g. baked and fermented products, some made using proprietary yeasts or bacteria).

The bill instructs the Director of Health to 'adopt rules pursuant to Chapter 91, necessary for the purposes of this section, including rules for the testing of foods to determine the presence and content of genetically engineered material'. However, in the instances above, and in many other cases, there is simply no testing available that would allow the state to detect 'genetically engineered material' that is not present in the product.

The University's final concern is that no agency has been identified and no funding is proposed for the testing of food products and enforcement of the proposed rules.