



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture
And
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor
Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at 2:46 pm
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SB 375 – RELATING TO INDUSTRIAL HEMP

Chairs Ruderman and Keith-Agaran, Vice Chairs Riviere and Shimabukuro, and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor, we respectfully submit testimony in support of SB 375, which authorizes the growing of industrial hemp for certain purposes under specified conditions.

Through the efforts of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and other units within the University of Hawai'i system, we fully support diversified agriculture and the development of new crops for cultivation in Hawai'i. Under legislation passed in 2014, CTAHR is currently conducting a limited-scale research project on industrial hemp. However, given the federal restrictions on importation and movement of hemp seed, it is not practical for CTAHR to conduct extensive variety trials, a step that would be advisable given that hemp is a temperate crop and there are currently no established varieties for cultivation in the tropics. Ideally for biomass production, industrial hemp plants should grow tall and straight, but the temperate varieties are known to branch and flower at low height in the tropics. By permitting private farmers to obtain and test their ability to cultivate hemp, as authorized by SB 375, many more possible varieties could potentially be assessed under field conditions.

A second issue with an entirely new crop such as hemp is the absence of any established market for the crop in Hawaii. Permitting farmers to conduct trial plantings will also allow them to assess market potential for their crop, and hopefully begin to establish market value.

Thus, with industrial hemp, there are distinct advantages to permitting private farmers to conduct trial plantings in order to develop the sort of variety, yield, and market information that a more targeted university trial cannot obtain, as well as to enable farmers to test cultivation practices under a broad range of conditions across the islands.

We believe that the Department of Agriculture is the correct agency to manage the proposed permitting program, although we defer to that agency with respect to fiscal and management aspects of the proposed legislation. We support the permitting approach of SB 375, and believe that it complements the more technical research that can be conducted by the University of Hawai'i under the previous legislation.