

HB-756

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
cheryl B.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Support

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GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII

JOSH GREEN
LT. GOVERNOR
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DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS**

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TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM J. AILA, JR, CHAIRMAN
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
HEARING ON FEBRUARY 10, 2021 AT 10:00AM VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

HB 756 RELATING TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

February 10, 2021

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Perruso, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) strongly supports this bill which adds the Chairperson of the Hawaiian Homes Commission to the Board of Agriculture. The Hawaiian Homes Commission approved a similar measure, but it was not included in the Governor's administrative package.

The Hawaii Department of Agriculture headed by the Board of Agriculture works to support, enhance, promote, and protect Hawaii's agriculture and aquaculture industries. The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act authorizes DHHL to lease agricultural lands or lands used for aquaculture purposes. As the State looks to increase food security across the State, the interests of agricultural homestead lessees should be represented on the Board of Agriculture.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

JOSH GREEN
Lt. Governor



PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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**TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

**FEBRUARY 10, 2021
10:00 A.M.
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 756
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Chairperson Hashem and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 756. This measure adds the Chairperson of the Hawaiian Homes Commission (“DHHL Chairperson”) to the Board of Agriculture (“Board”). The Department of Agriculture (“Department”) offers the following comments.

The Department has concerns regarding expanding the Board to accommodate requests of specific stakeholder groups seeking additional representation on the Board. This measure adds the DHHL Chairperson to the Board to represent the interests of agricultural homestead lessees. The agricultural homestead lessees on Department of Hawaiian Homes Lands (“DHHL”) are a relatively small subset of the estimated 7,328 farming operations in the State.

Currently, the Board consists of members that provide geographic representation for the counties of Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai, at-large members for stakeholder representation, and ex-officio members that ensure input regarding the State’s interest in supporting and promoting land, water, economic development, and industry standards and education agriculture. Together with the Chairperson of the Board, the Board provides effective board governance for the Department.

Boards for state agencies are legislatively created to provide policy insight and oversight by subject matter experts and representatives of important stakeholder communities. The number of members is an important consideration to optimize and



ensure fair, efficient decision making and a smaller board size is favored to mitigate against the potential for inaction due to decision making inefficiencies or gridlock. Ordinarily, expansion of membership on boards overseeing government agencies is appropriate when such addition significantly enhances and contributes to the board's ability to provide policy guidance to enable the Department to accomplish its mission and core responsibilities.

Adding the DHHL Chairperson as an additional ex-officio member increases the total number of board members and creates a precedence and opportunity for others stakeholder groups to request further expansion of the Board and compromise its ability to govern efficiently. If this Committee is inclined to move this measure, the Department believes that re-designating one of the existing at-large positions for the stakeholder-oriented representation on the Board sought by DHHL may be a more appropriate approach rather than creating a new ex-officio one.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.