

**DAVID Y. IGE**  
Governor

**JOSH GREEN**  
Lt. Governor



**PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**MORRIS ATTA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512  
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

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

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2021  
10:30 A.M.  
Via VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**SCR 46, SD 1  
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO  
ESTABLISH A KONA AREA AGRICULTURAL WORKING GROUP  
TO PROMOTE AGRICULTURE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND HOUSING**

Chairperson Hashem and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Concurrent Resolution 46, SD1. This resolution requests the Department of Agriculture ("Department") to establish an eleven-member Kona area agricultural working group to promote agriculture, economic development, and housing, and to develop a comprehensive plan for the Kona area. The agricultural working group is to also develop a framework to address the following issues as they pertain to Kona and Hawaii island: improved public/private communications, increased farmer profitability, agricultural education, land tenure, Hawaiian Home Lands, affordable agricultural water, fuel costs, transportation, greenwaste, conservation, wastewater, sustainable agricultural techniques, and investment opportunities. The Department offers comments with strong concerns.

This resolution contemplates a complex collaboration of State, County, and private expertise to devise a comprehensive integration of resources and services to establish a framework for the development of agriculture, affordable housing, and public infrastructure while promoting environmental and cultural practices. The Department lacks the resources, staffing, and expertise to oversee this effort that has been compounded by the demands for cutbacks imposed by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as demonstrated by the proposed dramatic reductions in our staff position counts and operating budget. To accomplish an all-encompassing planning effort such



as this, the Department would require significant additional funding to hire a consultant(s).

The objectives of this resolution are substantially akin to devising a master or regional plan for agriculture, housing, and infrastructure in the Kona area, and in some cases, island wide. As such, we believe it more appropriate to request the County of Hawaii, as the appropriate planning authority, to lead the effort as they have a Kona Community Development Plan which was adopted in 2008. This plan touches on many of the issues listed in this resolution. They would be a better fit as the County has more experience, familiarity, and local knowledge in regional economic development and would be intimately aware of the key issues, constraints, and opportunities in economic development, housing, agriculture, and other priorities. The County leadership may be supplemented with the input of the agencies and organizations identified in this resolution. Then, perhaps, the County can determine what parts of the existing Kona Community Development Plan and other relevant plans should be updated to reflect current situations and possible solutions that are realistic from a capital and operating cost perspective. Under this scenario, the Department could provide input to the agricultural aspects of the study, without being burdened with oversight of other issues such as energy, housing, homesteading, wastewater treatment, potable use, and transportation, in which it has no expertise.

The Department anticipates that regardless of which agency is designated to lead this effort, it will be difficult to meet the expectations of this resolution without additional funding and possibly, manpower. Additionally, any effort for such a complicated planning task would require more than the allotted time to complete. We estimate a minimum of 18 months with a starting funding request of \$500,000.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this resolution.