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Governor

JOSH GREEN
Lt. Governor



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Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2021

1:00 P.M.

Via VIDEOCONFERENCE

SCR 46 / SR 31
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO
ESTABLISH A KONA AREA AGRICULTURAL WORKING GROUP
TO PROMOTE AGRICULTURE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND HOUSING

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Concurrent Resolution 46. This measure requests the Department of Agriculture ("Department") to establish a Kona area agricultural working group to promote agriculture, economic development, and housing. The Department offers comments with strong concerns.

The Department appreciates the intent of this measure, however, given its extremely broad and ambitious scope, we have extremely serious reservations regarding our ability to effectively address the stated objectives and meet the expectations of this resolution. 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 that will meet laudable goals for the development of agriculture, affordable housing, and public infrastructure while promoting desirable



environmental and cultural practices. This huge task cannot be accomplished effectively without substantial financial and personnel resources to research all the requested opportunities and options. Regretfully, 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.

The objectives of this measure are substantially akin to devising a master or regional plan for agriculture, housing, and infrastructure in the Kona area. As such, it may be more appropriate for 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 they have more experience in local economic development. The Department respectfully suggests rather than using the Keahole Agricultural Park as the impetus for developing a comprehensive regional development plan, that the County of Hawaii be requested to identify what it believes to be key issues, constraints, and opportunities in economic development, housing, agriculture, and other priorities, 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 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.

SCR-46

Submitted on: 3/11/2021 1:29:50 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/12/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Rick Gaffney	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Too often, the agencies of our government, fail to communicate. SCR46 aims to change that and serve as an example of the solutions that are possible when diverse interests and agencies like Agriculture and Business and Health and Hawaiian Homes and our educational institutions, work together to solve some of our most intractable issues. Creating the Working Group envisioned by SCR46 could lead to additional lands designated for agriculture actually being utilized, additional homes being built, reducing the size of the DHHL waitlist, eliminating the wasteful dumping of recycled wastewater, and much more.

Please support SCR46 and support a new paradigm in Hawaii.

Mahalo,

Rick Gaffney

Keahole, HI

SCR-46

Submitted on: 3/11/2021 2:42:13 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/12/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kirstin Kahaloa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I wholeheartedly support SCR46, to create a Kona Area Agricultural Working Group. The Kona district is highly dependent on tourism, making our workforce dependent on jobs in this sector. This working group will help create opportunities to diversify our economy and keep families working. As we recover from the pandemic, an ag park is a viable response to building a sustainable economy in Hawai'i. The vicinity to the community college can create more educational and workforce development opportunities too. The closeness to the airport is an additional win-win. As a resident in Kona, please consider supporting this resolution.

Mahalo,

Kirstin Kahaloa