

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 COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2021

1:05 P.M.

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 92 &
SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 71
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO CONSIDER
AMENDING THE ELIGIBILITY QUALIFICATIONS AND LEASE TERMS
FOR ITS AGRICULTURAL LOTS TO AID SMALL FARM BUSINESSES.

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SCR 92 and SR 71. These resolutions request the Department of Agriculture ("Department") to consider amending the eligibility qualifications and lease terms for its agricultural lots to aid small farm businesses. The Department offers the following comments.

The Department's agricultural parks program was established specifically to support new farmers and small farm business to encourage growth in agriculture by making smaller sized state-owned lands available to them at reasonable cost. This program has reasonable size parcels that range more than three (3) acres, many with necessary farming infrastructure. Often, the greatest challenge for new or small farming operations is the cost of installing irrigation infrastructure necessary for farming. Our



Agricultural Park program removes that obstacle for those farmers in most instances. Our most significant challenge for issuing new leases to new and small farming operations is the lack of good, vacant farmland and not a shortage of qualified farmers. Our experience indicates that there is rarely a lack of qualified bonafide or new farmers applying for desirable parcels. The Department believes its agricultural land program does meet the intent of the resolution with fair and open procurement policies that determine with whom the Department begins lease discussions. The Department does not believe modifying the lease qualifications is necessary to improve the Department's ability to fill vacant lands with new small farmers.

If the intent of this measure is to relax the bona fide farmer requirements to expand the eligible pool of applicants for leasing state-owned farm lands, the Department is always amenable to revisiting its current standards for qualification to ensure it adjusts for and incorporates any appropriate changes in agriculture. The Department notes, however, that those standards were established to ensure that only persons and entities who can demonstrate credible agricultural knowledge or experience and exhibit a serious intent to farm would be eligible to apply for use of state-lands. This longstanding approach was adopted to ensure that state-owned agricultural land assets would remain in productive agricultural use rather than possibly be abused as a vehicle for acquiring inexpensive lands for residential use with minimal, if any, farming occurring on the premises.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

SCR-92

Submitted on: 3/19/2021 4:48:33 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/24/2021 1:05:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Victoria Anderson | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Please pass this important resolution.

SCR-92

Submitted on: 3/21/2021 1:18:35 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/24/2021 1:05:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dana Keawe | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

i support scr92